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SCIENCE FICTION AGE

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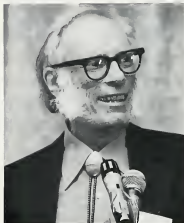
82 CONTRIBUTORS

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EDITORIAL

By Scott Edelman

From rayguns to men on the moon... we're living in a *Science Fiction Age*!



Isaac Asimov,
1920-1992. Beneath
The Naked Sun, he
mimed The Caves of
Steel to forge a
Foundation that
will last until The
End of Eternity.
Photo by Jay Klein.

WE ARE ALL LIVING IN A SCIENCE FICTION AGE. The ridiculed rocket ships and rayguns from the pulp fiction of our youth have spawned real-world men on the moon and laser surgery miracles.

Science fiction has won! The human race survived from the Stone Age to the Iron Age to the Modern Age on its own, but it took science fiction to inspire us and boost this fledgling race to the Space Age—the science fiction age—in which we now live. And now that our once-scorned dreams and visions have come into their own as wondrous realities, what better name for the most ambitious science fiction magazine to grace the Planet Earth?

Science Fiction Age is born!

Ever since we announced our plans for a new science fiction magazine, congratulations and inquiries have poured into our office from intrigued readers and writers alike. One issue that inevitably arose was whether I, as the editor of this magazine, would attempt to change the shimmering face of science fiction itself. Considering the history of the field, a question like that is not unexpected. Over the decades, magazine editors have exerted a tremendous influence over not only their own magazines, but over science fiction as a whole. Haven't we have named the awards given to superior s.f. each year at the World Science Fiction Convention the "Hugos" after Hugo Gernsback, founder of the first science fiction magazine and someone better known as an editor than a writer? And didn't the field take its first great leap forward when John

Campbell, Jr. molded our futures past with *Astounding*, in the process giving us Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, Lester del Rey and the whole Golden Age? *Astounding* was an evolutionary triumph for which we are so collectively grateful that the award given out each year for best new science fiction writer, the one on whom we place so much of our hopes for the future, is known as the Campbell.

In response to this, I must confess that I have no hidden agenda other than to provide you, the reader, with the best science fiction possible. I have no ax to grind, nor literary manifesto to promote. I am not here to champion New Wave science fiction, Old Guard science fiction, cyberpunk, literary s.f., hard s.f., or any other partisan flavor. I hope *Science Fiction Age* will be a medley of the finest flavors, so much so that you'll be unable to pin us down to any one -ism. In the pages of *Science Fiction Age* you will find writers and artists from every branch of the genre with but one single element in common—a commitment to excellence!

Perhaps the great s.f. author Theodore Sturgeon summed up our editorial policy best when he pronounced "Ninety percent of science fiction is crap, but then 90 percent of everything is crap." If Sturgeon was right, then our job is to bring you that other 10 percent. The trick, of course, is finding it. My job as editor of *Science Fiction Age* is to do just that—to ferret out the most intelligent, adult, science fiction being written today. To bring you, the reader, the original, exciting and thought-provoking stories you are looking for.

We will cover science fiction wherever we find it, not only with our fiction and essays, but also with our coverage of s.f. in books, movies, comics and computer and role-playing games. We believe we have succeeded in assembling the most exciting magazine the science fiction field has ever seen. And every two months, we will keep on doing just that. We hope you'll hitch a ride to our newly risen star.

It would be unseemly to begin this new publishing venture, which we hope will be regarded as the brightest news in science fiction in 1992, without commenting for a brief moment on what must undoubtedly be the saddest news of 1992—the passing of Isaac Asimov. Without Isaac Asimov, there would be no *Science Fiction Age*. Isaac is the one who blazed the trails that we but humbly follow. As a small gesture of remembrance and commemoration, I would like to direct your attention to the first story in our issue, Adam-Troy Castro's "The Last Robot," a touching tale that says thank you from us all.

Would it be too much to dedicate this first issue of *Science Fiction Age* to the memory of Isaac Asimov, spiritual father of us all? We think not.

I have spent most of my life living in a science fiction age. Now, simply by opening the pages of this magazine, it's become your turn.

Welcome.

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—New Scientist

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Dear Mr. Edelman:

I've been looking over your flyer for *Science Fiction Age*. Something peculiar caught my attention. Out of the fifteen or so contributors listed, every one of them was male. Not a female in sight.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not busting your chops over this, nor accusing you of being a misogynist or anti-woman or any other ridiculous thing. Yet surely, with all the incredible talent out there, one of the names touted to launch this magazine could have been a woman. It seems an oversight unworthy of your efforts.

I write science fiction and fantasy in a variety of fields: comics, animation, live-action TV and film, and computer games. I've found that one of the best ways to bring more women into these fields of interest is to show them that other women are involved. With women making up 50 percent of any potential market, it's foolish to overlook any chance of gaining their participation and interest.

Regards and good luck,
Christy Marx

We at *Science Fiction Age* want to assure you and the other subscribers who took the time to write us on this issue that we are most certainly aware of the fact that there are many prominent women writers in the science fiction field.

The fact that only names of male authors appeared in our subscription promotion mailing earlier this year was not due to negligence, sexism, stupidity or chauvinism—it was simply a matter of time. When we began assembling this magazine, I personally contacted many of the top women writers in the field inviting them to contribute to this new venture. As it happened, none of the women had stories available within the time frame of our deadline.

I understand how this gender imbalance might be interpreted, but an editor cannot force writers to submit to a new venture.

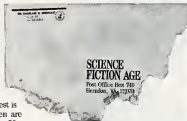
As you will see by looking at the contents of this premiere issue, numerous women have contributed to making our first issue a spectacular one. And in the future, you will see in the pages of *Science Fiction Age*: Marion Zimmer Bradley's reminiscence about conventions, book reviews by Ellen Kushner, and more by women writers.

We hope that you will keep an open mind, and judge us by the magazine itself. And then feel free to let me know what you think of the result.

Dear Science Fiction Age:

On July 5, 1992, the mailbox located at Vernon Street and Santa Rosa Avenue was vandalized with an explosive device. The letters inside, mostly mine, were shredded and burned. The letter which was intended for your company was a bit more damaged than the rest. Please excuse the mess!

Sincerely,
Charlene L. Arbogast, Ph.D.



We knew our initial subscription drive was going to yield explosive results, but this is taking things to extremes!

Dear Mr. Edelman:

Delighted to hear about the new magazine. I hope it takes off, and I wish you the best of luck to that end.

I was, however, disappointed to read that you'll be featuring fantasy stories in addition to the science fiction.

I am not interested in fantasy, and would ask that you please notate somehow which stories are sci-fi and which are fantasy because I don't want to have to begin reading them to find out.

Thanks,
Scott Dikkers

Fantasy was considered a subset of s.f. for many decades before it began being marketed as its own genre. We feel that many s.f. readers are still interested in fantasy and we'll publish those stories we feel are up to our critical requirements. As for distinguishing it from the science fiction stories that surround it, let the titles and illustrations be your guide, as with Resa Nelson's excellent fantasy story this issue.

Readers—We want to know what you think of our first edition. Please write to us at: Letters to the Editor, *Science Fiction Age*, P.O. Box 366, Damascus, MD 20872. See you next issue!

SCIENCE FICTION AGE

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 1

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Picture Credits: Robert McCall: 4, 62-67; Jay Klein: 6; The Books: 12; NASA: 22; Vincent Di Fate: 24; D.C. Comics: 68; Dark Horse Comics: 73; Interplay: 74 (BOTH); Lark Books, Photo by Linda Sweeting: 81.

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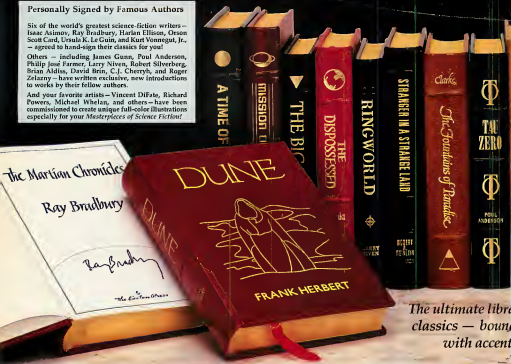
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BOOKS

By Eric T. Baker, John Kessel and Michael Bishop

Knight's latest "Why Do Birds" is magical but flawed.



In *Why Do Birds*, Damon Knight packs the human race in a mile-high cube, a bizarre creation realized in cover art by Bob Eggleton.

REVIEWING *WHY DO BIRDS* (TOR BOOKS, NEW YORK, 1992, \$18.95), the latest book by science fiction fixture Damon Knight, brings with it a certain amount of trepidation. After all, daring to critique a work by Damon Knight is something akin to questioning the Ten Commandments.

Damon Knight may very well be the most influential member of the science fiction community. His credentials as an inventor of what science fiction is today are matchless. He is the author of several classic stories from the fifties, and he is the field's first great critic with a series of essays collected in *In Search of Wonder*. He also founded the Science Fiction Writers of America, edited the classic series of *Orbit* anthologies, and currently edits the critical journal *Mosaic*. Additionally, each summer for the past 25 years he has helped mold the field's upcoming science fiction writers by teaching at the Clarion Writing Workshop, a breeding ground for many of today's great younger writers.

So do not stone me when I start by saying that *Why Do Birds*, by Damon Knight, one of the legends in our field, is a great book with a flawed ending. For my quibble with the ending is almost meaningless, as Knight's words have such a magical power over the reader that the bottom line is still this—You should buy it, read it, read it again, and then send your guesses about what the ending means to me, care of this magazine, so we can enjoy deciphering this great speculative artifact. For Knight's unanswered questions are worth more than most other writers' perfectly finished puzzles.

Damon Knight (along with writer Kate Wilhelm) always conducts the fifth and sixth weeks of Clarion, currently being held at Michigan State University. I was a student there myself in 1989, and during my sixth week there, Damon consented to let us turn the tables on him and critique "Resilience," a story of his that Mike Christie, a fellow Clarionite, discovered in the February 1941 issue of *Stirring Science Stories*. It was a short, twist-ending tale about a race of rubber men armed with metal fatigue guns who conquer the earth. The class analyzed the story with varying degrees of satire, sarcasm, and seriousness while Damon rocked with laughter throughout. As I recall, he particularly liked the explanation from Ted Chiang (yet another Nebula Award winner to come out of Clarion) of why a metal fatigue gun would not work the way Damon had described.

Why Do Birds, which Damon accurately describes as "a comic novel of the destruction of the human race," immediately brought that story of the rubber men back to me. "Resilience" was a pulp tale with a pulp premise, full of pulp logic, and told with a pulp style. *Why Do Birds* is modern novel with modern logic and a modern style based on a pulp premise.

In the year 2002 A.D., Ed Stone returns to the Earth after having been kidnapped by aliens and held in suspended animation since 1931. The aliens have explained to Ed that the Earth is going to be destroyed, but if he will put the whole human race in a box, they will pick it up and save humanity by taking it to another world.

Since this is not a pulp novel, it does not begin with Ed's abduction. It doesn't deal with Ed's experiences on the alien space craft. It doesn't even start with Ed waking up in the same hotel, 70 years after he went to bed. No, the book opens where you would expect a modern novel about a man who thinks the human race is going to be saved by space aliens to begin: in a psychiatrist's office, where Ed is undergoing a court-ordered mental exam.

The first half of the book follows Ed as he sets out on his mission with nothing more than the truth (as he apparently believes it) and a ring that makes people who shake his hand instantly like him. If this doesn't sound like enough to make the whole human race climb into a box (after all, how many hands can one man shake?), then you are underestimating humanity's ability to manipulate and delude itself.

Damon's message of how easily humanity accepts obviously irrational ideas would be less chilling if we were further removed from the Iraqi war. Damon's Cube Group (the experts ultimately assembled to manage the production and loading of Ed's cube) parallels the cabal that orchestrated the United States of America's rush into Kuwait. Damon's descriptions of the ad campaigns and media manipulations that move people to abandon their lives on this world for a place

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in Ed's box parallel the techniques employed by Hill and Knowlton to convince everyone in the United States from Congress on down that Saddam Hussein was Hitler reborn.

Just as the best of Damon's humor comes from his individual characters, so does the best of his story telling. *Why Do Birds* is a novel devoid of author intrusion. It is a novel of dialogue and events. There are no long internal monologues or deep digressions into backgrounds and histories. It is a novel of showing rather than telling. This has its down side, in that the book ends without a wise old man coming down from the mountain and explaining what has happened. The reader is often left to draw his or her own conclusions. For instance, Linda Lavalle, Ed's love interest, begins having dreams that seem to be variations on those which Ed claims to have. Ed, Ed's doctor, and Linda herself all have explanations for why she has these dreams, but Damon never intrudes to tell the reader which one is correct.

Despite these things, Damon's work has to be judged the way he judges other writers' work: on the strength of its protagonist. Ed Stone is a wonderful character,

and it is Damon's portrayal of him that keeps the reader turning pages. Ed appears to be a man in the grip of an impossible relationship, a relationship that (because of Damon's pulp premise) is with a group of unseen space aliens. When the psychiatrist asks Ed how he feels about the aliens, Ed says, "I love them, but they scare me." That sums up one of the tensions in the novel, and most readers are going to recognize the feeling, even if they've never had it about extraterrestrials.

Like all real loves, Ed's does not appear to be an uncritical one. When questioned, he admits how unfair the aliens have been to him, how little they have told him, and how big the job they have given him. He admits to doubting them. He doubts their motives, their means, and even their existence. And yet, it is love. Ed claims that he can't take the chance that his memories are wrong. He has to believe in what he remembers. He has to try to save his race, even if he doesn't know from what or for what. Within its fantastic premise, it is the reality of Ed's apparent struggle with himself that makes this a good book.

"Appears" and "apparent" are the key words, however, because a second source

of tension in the book is the possibility that Ed is just a con man. There are hints along the way that Ed may not be what he appears, that he may not even believe in what he says. The reader is just as much in doubt as the people of the book who are getting into Ed's box. This second line of tension is just as important to the book's quality as is the first one.

At the beginning of this piece I claimed that *Why Do Birds* has a flawed ending. It is not a pulp ending. It is a modern ending, but I did not find enough clues in the text to be confident that I understood it. This final confusion is not fatal, for I had enjoyed the rest of the book too much to mind being a little confused, and I look forward to reading it yet again in search of more of Damon's clues. I may not have understood the ending, but I never doubted that Damon knew exactly what he was doing. You will find yourself trusting Damon in the same way the characters in his book trust Ed Stone.

DOOMSDAY BOOK, by *Connie Willis*, Bantam Books, 1992, 456 pp., Hardcover: \$22; Trade Paperback: \$12.

Connie Willis has always expressed a love for Shakespeare, but until now her work, though often brilliant and always impeccably crafted, has lacked scope. In *Doomsday Book* she stretches, and the result is a big novel whose vivid characters, complex storyline, and melding of comedy and tragedy credibly evoke Shakespearean comparisons.

The novel takes up events in the lives of two secondary characters from Willis's award winning novelette "Fire Watch." Kivrin, an Oxford history student in the mid-21st century, when historians travel in time, is sent for her praelectum to the year 1320. Through error she ends up in 1348, the year the Black Plague killed half the population of Europe. Back in 2050, her mentor Mr. Dunworthy, suspecting trouble, struggles against block-headed administrators and a deadly influenza epidemic that has quarantined Oxford and threatens to make Kivrin's retrieval impossible.

Alternating between these two narratives, the story builds slowly. I have some reservations about the novel's dependence on a plot trick that requires Willis to put off for hundreds of pages the revelation that Kivrin has arrived in the wrong year—a surprise so heavily foreshadowed as to be evident to the reader within the book's first chapters. But Willis uses these pages to develop a host of characters and present a vivid picture of life in 14th century England. Kivrin finds her survival dependent on the family of Guillaume d'Iverie, a petty nobleman, short-circuiting her expectations and the common power fantasy of time travel stories whereby we imagine ourselves superior to the people of the past.

BOOKS TO WATCH FOR

The Best of Astounding, edited by *James Gunn* (Carroll & Graf) Remember when you fell in love with science fiction for the first time? This collection of short novels will remind you just why it was called the Golden Age.

Speaking in Tongues, by *Jau McDonald* (Bantam Spectra) He dazzled us all with *Desolation Road*. Pick up this short story collection to sample one of the finest voices of the new generation of s.f. writers, speaking in a tongue all his own.

A Million Open Doors, by *John Barnes* (Tor Books) His last novel was a Nebula and Hugo contender. Here is the latest galaxy-spanner by one of Heinlein's spiritual descendants.

Whodunnit? edited by *Mike Resnick* (DAW Books) Science fiction's greatest minds join together to solve the crimes of the century. Find out what really happened at the grassy knoll.

The Hacker Crackdown, by *Bruce Sterling* (Bantam Books) The 90's are showing us that cyberpunk is more than just a genre game. Find out how the real world is becoming dangerously more like science fiction every day.

The Neighbor of the Beast, by *Lionel Penn* (Ace Books) There hasn't been this much laughter in s.f. since Frederic Brown wrote short-shorts. Lionel Penn is a national treasure.

The Ugly Little Boy, by *Isaac Asimov* and *Robert Silverberg* (Doubleday Foundation) Robert Silverberg builds a novel out of Isaac Asimov's own favorite short story. Isaac may no longer be with us, but here his magic is made to live on.

The Spirit Ring, by *Lois McMaster Bujold* (Bantam Books) The author of *Falling Free* does it again. Don't wait for this one to show up on the Hugo and Nebula Awards ballots. Read it today.

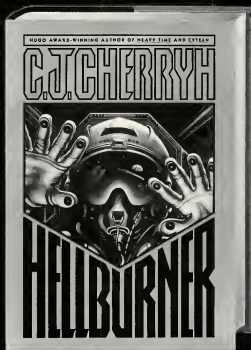
The Collected Stories of Robert Silverberg, Volume One (Bantam Spectra) The most difficult decision is not whether to buy it, but where to begin reading it. A master at his best.

Lost Boys: A Novel, by *Orson Scott Card* (Harper Collins) You either loved or hated the shorter version of this one. Now Card, with more to say on the subject, has expanded the talked about story version. Sure to be one of the most controversial novels of the year.

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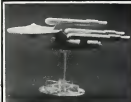
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Against her better judgment she gets involved in their lives.

Among the most affecting of Willis's deftly drawn characters, in a genre not noted for its clear-eyed portrayal of children, are Agnes, the five-year-old daughter of Lady Ellwys, and Colin, the great nephew of Mr. Dunworthy's friend Dr. Mary Ahrens. Much of the action consists of various forms of care-giving, and in this, curiously, Willis shows more faith in bachelor men than women: the mothers of this story—the Lady Ellwys, her mother-in-law the Lady Imeyne, the godawful Mrs. Gaddson, and Colin's mother Dierdre—are self-centered, distracted, overbearing, or unconcerned with their children's welfare. Fathers are absent. Uncles, aunts, and strangers become the caregivers. Dunworthy is a mother hen, a skeptic about human nature who believes that if anything can go wrong, it will. For most of the novel he seems to be right. But the resolution of the book depends on the efforts of people he has had no good reason to hope will be able to rise to the occasion of a crisis.

Willis's triumph of characterization is Father Roche, the rustic priest of the Medieval village, a man who must memorize the Latin of Catholic rites because he cannot read, and who is so full of superstition that he talks to God as if God were sitting across from him in the room. Roche grows subtly into Willis's most powerful creation, the lynchpin for the novel's ultimate meanings. Intensely human, the priest is a man of goodness without sanctimony, of faith without pretense, who attains heroic stature without a single moment of grandstanding by either the character or the author.

A number of Willis stories have centered on a young woman trapped by circumstances, by history, and often by men. She's helpless to escape her fate except through the agency of other, good men, who often prove ineffectual to help her. In *Kivrin's* story it seems to me Willis finally resolves this obsessive theme. It is her most profound statement on the struggle to protect your loved ones from a world full of dangers, on the haphazard workings of chance, and on the desire to control everything in a world that will not be controlled. *Doomsday Book* offers both comic and serious tangles with fate. Faced with the inescapable fact that the universe throws unavoidable tragedies at people, Willis's characters react in two ways: they blame others for acts of God, or they swallow their anger and try to minimize the damage—a goal which all too often proves to be a forlorn hope.

The novel's final 200 pages, in which the plague comes to the village in 1348 and

Dunworthy, in 2060, mounts a last, desperate attempt to save Kivrin, are gripping in intensity, graphic in detail, and heartbreaking in import. In these chapters Willis pushes beyond anything I have seen before in her work. Kivrin struggles to accomplish even the simplest of tasks—say, to sterilize a knife—in the face of obstacles that would read as black comedy if the circumstances weren't so tragic. Willis spares us little agony, yet out of it creates moments of grace. The purity of her attention to *foet* brings

Doomsday Book strikes with the force of deeply felt truth.

home, with a power that no amount of contrivance could achieve, the simple truth of human weakness, the perversity of accident, our frequent helplessness to save the ones we love, and the heroism of trying.

In the end this novel rises beyond surprise, cleverness, and craft to stark tragedy, beyond genre to something universal. Without resorting to doctrine, this is a religious book as powerful in its humanity as Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. A story much simpler than its plot intends, much larger than its number of pages, *Doomsday Book* strikes with the force of deeply felt truth.

John Kessel

Will the Last Person to Leave the Planet Please Shut Off the Sun? By Mike Resnick, Tor Books, 1992, 368 pp., hardcover, \$19.95.

In *Will the Last Person to Leave the Planet Please Shut Off the Sun?* Mike Resnick, a popular SF-and-fantasy novelist and twice a Hugo Award winner for short fiction, gathers 28 of his stories, dating from 1977 to 1992, while expressing amazement that the form permits writing "as ambitious and meaningful" as does the novel. Resnick also forthrightly implies that of the 28 pieces collected here, only five transcend the trivial, in intent or execution: two East African Utopia stories ("Kiriyaaga" and "For I Have Touched the Sky"), two Teddy Roosevelt stories ("Over There" and "The Light that Blinds, the Claws that Catch"), and a truly poignant Arthurian allegory, "Winter Solstice."

I largely agree with this candid assessment, the downside of which jumps out at anyone with even a rudimentary grasp of math; namely, that approximately 23 of the remaining pieces fall into the categories of "good-natured pieces of fluff" (Resnick's words) or of mildly adept tales lacking real substance or memorability. The imbalance in this ratio makes it hard for me to recommend this collection to anyone but Resnick completists, inveterate fans of "good-natured fluff," and elitist reviewers in search of material about which to complain. Is that audience large enough to

Continued on page 80

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Heinlein's famous stranger finally arrives in Hollywood's strange land.

After many delays, Hollywood is about to get its turn at portraying the enigmatic Grogger, Michael Valentine Smith. Art by James Warhola.



ROBERT HEINLEIN IS GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. The Missouri-born civil engineer whose visions propelled him into the position of Dean of American Science Fiction Writers is back in the cinematic spotlight after a hiatus that spanned more than four decades. *Stranger in a Strange Land*, often optioned (Henry and Peter Fonda considered it as a co-starring vehicle in the '70s, but never produced), is currently on Hollywood's slate.

Published in 1961, *Stranger in a Strange Land* is perhaps Heinlein's most controversial novel. A satiric view of Western mores and morals, the book broke through the genre barrier as few other s.f. books have done (*Dune* would be another) and became the pop-culture Koran of the flower-power generation. Hippie psychopath Charles Manson reportedly embraced its ethics to the point of "disincorporating" those he viewed as transgressors.

Surprisingly, this latest film project is one of only a few involving Heinlein. Having launched his career in the August 1939 *Astounding Magazine*, Heinlein blazed an unprecedented path through the genre, igniting and inspiring a universe of futurist readers and future writers until his death in May 1988. The author became science fiction's dominating persona, generating more than 40 books, including 12 juvenile works.

In 1947, Heinlein migrated from Philadelphia to Los Angeles for the express purpose of doing for films what he had done for the genre's literature. Adapting his first novel, the 1947 juvenile *Rocketship Galileo*, Hein-

lein penned the screenplay for the technologically accurate *Destination Moon*, the film which precipitated the s.f. cycle of the '50s.

To his disappointment, however, the epic was beaten to the box office by the low-budget quickie *Rocketship X-M*, which warped the direction Heinlein hoped to chart for celluloid science fiction. Instead, a wave of UFO and radioactive mutant films followed. The author refocused his efforts on the printed page, detouring only once in 1953 with the screenplay *Project Moonbase*.

The film *Stranger in a Strange Land* will detail the life and times of Valentine Michael Smith, born of humans but educated by Martians. Smith returns to Earth as a near-superman because of his parapsychological powers and becomes a Christ-like figure in a new religious order.

Lacking the plot-driven quality of Heinlein's earlier efforts, the underground classic was clearly a forum for his personal philosophy, which is stated in talking head, anticinematic dialogue. The task of resolving the story's abstract concepts and updating the ideas to appeal to '90s sensibilities has been undertaken by screenwriter Dan Waters, whose film credits include *Heathers*, *The Adventures of Ford Fairlane*, *Hudson Hawk*, and *Batman Returns*.

"I usually prefer Heinlein's early books, but I like *Stranger* because he bites off so much thematic material," says Waters, who takes a more optimistic view of the novel than critics who have labeled it everything from "disturbing" to "a crude power fantasy."

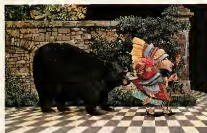
Stranger basically says that although we can master technology and science, we'll never figure out sex and religion. That's a '60s-type theme which needs to be contemporized. "Another problem," adds Waters, "is cutting it down from mini-series size to a feature film."

"No director is attached to the project yet, but there is a leading man—who will probably make Heinlein fans as angry as Batman fans were when they heard about Michael Keaton—Tom Hanks! He's a Heinlein scholar, and knows what he's doing. There are real similarities between Smith and his character in *Big*. Think about it!"

Isaac Asimov is another s.f. giant whose work has been conspicuously missing from cinematic adaptation, although many passes have been made without results. Just after the authors' death earlier this year, film rights were acquired, reportedly for more than \$1 million, to his epic *Foundation* trilogy. In addition, the deal included the right to option three others, *Foundation's Edge*, *Foundation and Earth*, and the soon-to-be-published *Forward the Foundation*. A feature film combining characters and plotlines from the original three books is currently being developed, and success could spawn a series of sequels.

The Princess of Mars has been deposited. The most widely read novel ever written—Edgar Rice Bur-

Come to the Land A Little Left of Reality



The Art of James C. Christensen.

(right) *Fantasies of the Sea*. (top left) *The Responsible Woman*.
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roughs' first in the John Carter series—was scheduled to be cinemized this year, with Tom Cruise and Julia Roberts rumored for the lead roles.

The script, by Terry Rossio and Ted Elliott of *Little Monsters* fame, shuffles the elements of the novel (originally serialized in *All-Story Magazine* in 1912) for feature film treatment. Disney was supposed to partially finance and distribute the \$60-million production. For almost 18 months, \$4 to \$5 million were pumped into the project for fx tests (four-armed Tharks riding eight-legged thoats), character design, model building, location surveys, and reworking the flawed script.

Due to pre-production delays, action director John McTiernan, who helmed *Predator*, *Die Hard* and *The Hunt for Red October*, decided to leave the project. Cruise and Roberts reportedly followed. As a result, the project now seems unlikely.

John Carter may be another of cinema's almost-ran hard-luck heroes. Back in 1935, ace animator Bob Clampett collaborated with Burroughs to produce a series of realistic nine-minute animovies starring the teleported Earthman and his exotic protagonists. A six-minute test reel was developed and screened for MGM execs who

agreed to back the shorts. Actual production began, then local reps from the South and mid-west lodged serious doubts that their audiences would comprehend the concept of a human on Mars. Instead, they suggested an animated series featuring Tharkan and the studio concurred.

A Ridley Scott-directed *Blade Runner* sequel may be in the planning stages. Word is that while the British director was restoring his cut of the 1982 s.f. thriller for its 10th-anniversary limited release and a video version, he decided there were enough elements left unplumbed to return to the nihilistic, retro-fitted world of 2017. The restored edition, incidentally, eliminates most of the hard-boiled voiceovers, cuts the ultra-violence added to the previous video version, eliminates the studio's tagged-on happy ending, and utilizes the Unicorn dream sequence which reveals that Rick Deckard is, indeed, a replicant.

Finding new source material may be problematic for Scott. The original film, based on a Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, was the late author's only work in *Runner's* futuristic milieu. Perhaps, Scott will simply return to the book—in making *Blade Runner*; he excised more than 90% of Dick's original

THE SCI-FI CHANNEL TAKES OFF

After several false starts over the past few years, the Sci-Fi Channel debuts this month with a prime time, unedited, feature presentation of "Star Wars." USA Network recently purchased the Sci-Fi Channel concept, along with its existing contracts with local cable companies.

The Sci-Fi Channel provides a continuous, 24-hour-a-day lineup of science fiction, fantasy and horror programming. Not only has the channel mined the finest features of s.f.'s vast filmic and television history, but it will also produce 12 movies each year, second only to the USA Network itself in terms of original cable movie production. The Sci-Fi Channel even has plans to introduce new video technologies to produce interactive services and virtual reality games.

During the week, viewers will be rewarded with unedited classics from television's greatest creators, such as *Doctor Who*, *The Prisoner*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Alien Nation*, *Lost in Space*, *Night Gallery*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Future Cop*, *War of the Worlds*, and many others. The lineup also includes several s.f. cartoon series. The Sci-Fi



Tom Baker is Dr. Who.

Channel will assemble its schedule from a library of over 1600 hours of series programming and 10,000 hours of NASA footage.

Other features include original series such as "NASA Watch," devoted to coverage of the space program, "Sci-Fi News," which focuses on the newest scientific and technological developments, and "Inside Space," which will explore both fact and fantasy aspects of space travel.

The Sci-Fi Channel will broadcast the first of their original made-for-cable films later this year. "Homewrecker" stars Bobby Benson ("Beauty and the Beast"), Sydney Walsh ("Nightmare on Elm Street"), and Sarah Rose Karr ("Father of the Bride"). The Sci-Fi Channel World Premiere Movie tells the story of a love triangle that develops between brilliant inventor David Whitson (Benson), his estranged wife Jane Whitson (Walsh), and Lucy, a thinking, feeling super-computer with feminine attributes. Lucy, in love with her creator, grows murderously jealous and sets out to kill Whitson's wife.

To sign aboard the Sci-Fi Channel, contact your local cable company.

...and develop another scenario with different characters.

For more futuristic fantasy, get ready for David (Dune) Lynch's *Romance of the Rose*; Albert (Cyborg) Pyun's *Nemesis*; Stanley (Bohret the Wind) Kramer's \$14-million *Bubble Man*; Joe (Gremlins) Dante's *Kidstuff*; Cryogenic, from Ron (Total Recall) Schusett's script about convicts in deep-freeze suspension; *Highlander III* with Christopher Lambert; *Meltdown* with Dolph Lundgren; Fred Olen Ray's *Mind Twisters* with Telly Savalas and Maria Ford; *Ecophobia* with Balthazar Getty and Drew Barrymore; and *Mind Warp* with Bruce Campbell and Angus Scrimm.



An unpleasant fellow from Coppola's *Dracula*. The director hopes *Dracula*'s success will allow a *Frankenstein* remake.

"If *Dracula* goes well, I'd love to do a horror trilogy—like Universal did back in the '30s," Francis Ford Coppola revealed during one of our recent visits to his set. "*Frankenstein*" would be a great choice for the second part." Several months later, the project, which will be faithful to Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, is moving forward under the auspices of *Dracula* scripter Jim Hart, who will also produce. Joel (The Last Boys) Schumacher will likely direct.

Seven years after *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, his previous s.f. foray, Mel Gibson returns to genre cinema with *The Rest of Daniel*. Directed by Steve (Warlock) Miner and costarring Elijah Wood, George Wendt, and Jamie Lee Curtis, the time-lapse romance casts the 36-year-old megastar as a 1939 test pilot who undergoes a perilous cryogenics experiment after his lover dies. Unfrozen 50 years later, he must survive a future bristling with surprises.

A few million years ago, dinosaurs ruled the Earth. Next summer, they'll rule the entertainment world. Currently there are at least five dino films scheduled for, or currently in production.

Continued on page 79

Dean Morrissey



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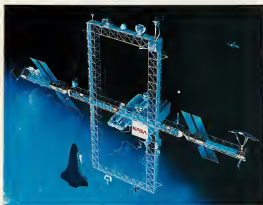
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The future isn't what it used to be, but then, maybe it never was.



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THE FIRST HALF OF THE TITLE FOR THIS ESSAY IS THE official, if usually forgotten, motto of the Science Fiction Writers of America. The organization was recently renamed the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, but it's still called by the traditional SFWA.

The name change is significant. Twenty years ago it couldn't have happened. Thirty years ago it would have been inconceivable. In those days, science fiction meant science, not magic and wizards and elves. Fantasy was tolerated, but just barely. In those days the business of science fiction was to paint pictures of various futures. Not "the" future; but plausible futures, places we might get to.

SFWA's official motto was meant humorously, a clever phrase that didn't mean much, but for some of us it's quite true. The future really isn't what it used to be. Why?

Twenty years ago, or near enough as to make no difference, three events had a major impact on my life. They also changed science fiction. First, John W. Campbell, Jr. died just after I began to sell science fiction. Campbell's passing marked the end of an era.

While *Analog's* owners searched for a new editor in chief, Miss Kay Thraut, the managing editor, put the magazine together from stories in the inventory: stories Campbell had already bought. As it happened, many of those stories were mine; the result was that a lot of my stuff got published in a few months, and I quite literally burst onto the scene as a major writer.

The second event was made possible by the first. I became well enough known that I was urged to run for president of Science Fiction Writers of America.

They didn't want my literary talent so much as my business and administrative experience. At first I wasn't interested, but then both Harlan Ellison and Poul Anderson asked me, and the shock of seeing them in agreement was too much.

As president of SFWA, I implemented drastic changes: we raised dues, hired an executive secretary (previously the elected officers had done all the work), reformed the Nebula Awards, changed the publications, and in general overhauled SFWA so that it looked like other professional writers' associations.

The third event was more personal: *The Mote in God's Eye*, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, was published by Simon and Schuster. It broke out of category and sold a lot of copies, and made it possible for me to make a living as a science fiction writer. It also got publishers interested in the financial possibilities of science fiction; so that *Lucifer's Hammer*, also by Niven and Pournelle, got the biggest advance ever paid (up until then) for a science fiction novel. That one sold well too, and publishers really got interested in science fiction. (And no, I'm not claiming sole responsibility for the big boom time of the '70s; clearly there were a lot of other SF works breaking out of category and selling like hot cakes.)

It's obvious why all that is interesting to me, but it's also relevant to my story, because those three events put me where I had both the opportunity and the necessity of closely watching what happened to science fiction since the end of the Golden Age.

Twenty years ago, there were fewer than 20 people able to make a living as science fiction writers. There were perhaps another 20 important SF writers who either worked part time or were essentially retired, and about another 20 up-and-coming new writers (I was one of them). The entire science fiction field: full-time writers, part-time writers, teachers, critics and retired writers numbered no more than 300 people.

In the early '70s, a serious reader could just about keep up with all the science fiction worth knowing about. At that time there was a great deal more science fiction than there had been in the '40s.

Between the '40s and the '70s there had been a couple of booms, followed inevitably by busts. In fact, that has been the pattern of science fiction for many years. Whether measured by sales or number of titles or number of professional authors, there has been a series of rises and collapses: boom and bust. However, no matter how bad the bust, things never fall back to where they started.

Viewed over a long enough span of time there has been a steady rise in science fiction's popularity; enough so that today it's impossible to keep up with the field. In the '50s just about anyone could read all the science fiction being published. In the '70s, a serious fan could read all the important SF. In the '90s,

Continued on page 70

Do the logistics of time travel make a paradox of reality?

What killed the dinosaurs? Maybe we did. Time Travel technology may yet allow us to solve this mystery by seeing for ourselves. Visualized by Vincent DiFate.



RECENTLY, SCIENCE FICTION AGE GATHERED together three of the best minds of our generation—working scientists who are also science fiction writers. These well known author-scientists, Arlan Andrews, Sr., Geoffrey A. Landis and Charles Sheffield were invited to discuss time travel from its fictional beginnings to its present day flickerings of proposed reality. We met near NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. to discuss time travel in all its ramifications.

Arlan Andrews, an employee of a national laboratory in the Southwest, is presently on loan for a year to the White House Science Office, where he works on issues of advanced manufacturing, critical technologies, and the supportive infrastructures of the U.S. space program. He has over 50 short stories, articles, comic books and poems appearing in all the major s.f. magazines.

Geoffrey A. Landis currently works at NASA Lewis Research Center in Cleveland, doing research on power systems for space, with his most recent project being to demonstrate the feasibility of using lasers to beam power from the earth to receivers in space. His first story, "Elemental," was a Hugo nominee in 1985, and in 1990 he won the Nebula Award for Best Short Story for "Ripples in the Dirac Sea," which explored the consequences of time travel.

Charles Sheffield is the Chief Scientist for the Earth Satellite Corporation, and was nominated for two

Hugos in 1991, for "Godspeed" in the Short Story category and "A Braver Thing" in the Novelette category.

SF AGE: Time travel has long been a staple of science fiction, perhaps the most popular of s.f. themes. What makes the time travel concept so attractive?

ANDREWS: The possibility of time travel is attractive to almost everyone because of our desire to change history, especially the opportunity to rearrange our own lives. As a fictional device, it is even more attractive to writers and readers, because it allows for an infinite number of stories of What Might Have Been, to speculate "What if?" on a grand scale.

SHEFFIELD: It's impossible to think about time travel without tangling with the logical paradoxes that seem to be implicit in the very idea of it. You go back and change history, but you yourself are a *consequence* of history. The paradox in time travel that I always stick on is also the most basic one, the Grandfather Paradox. You go back in time, and kill your own grandfather. Therefore, you don't exist, and you can't go back to kill him. And so on.

LANDIS: I find the subject of time travel fascinating, and have written several stories exploring the implications, although I have severe doubts about whether it is really in the realm of possibility. Time travel, more than any other theme in science fiction, raises the huge philosophical questions of existence, such as the question of free will. A paradox is something forbidden by logic, but it is almost impossible to get away from paradoxes if you consider the possibility of travel in time.

SF AGE: And yet certain people don't worry about the free will aspect.

ANDREWS: I think that paradoxes are artifacts of human limitations, our own perceptions of reality. One example of a logical paradox that Nature cares not one whit for is Zeno's Paradox, in which it is demonstrated logically that you can never get from one place to another, because you always have to cover half the remaining distance, no matter how close you get. In reality, we cover distance in discrete segments of space and time and ignore the incorrect statement of the problem. I think that the so-called paradoxes of time travel will not exist when we at last understand the true nature of Time and Space.

LANDIS: Is something wrong with the nature of logic itself? Or, if you travel in time, is the past you enter different from the one that led you to the present you came from? If it is indeed the same past as was the past of your present, then what happens if you make some change? Something that didn't happen in your past? Either you create a new present—in which case the past you went to *isn't* your own past, or else the universe must somehow *forbid* you to make changes. If you can't, then *you don't have free will!* The universe will somehow do something which prevents your change.

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ANDREWS: If the future is unknown to you, you have "free will" in the sense that you are changing your future. However, if you find out in some way what your future holds, you won't be able to change it. I don't see that as a violation of free will.

LANDIS: Yes, but can the present be changed? And if the present that is changed doesn't have a time machine or a time traveller to change the present, then who changed it?

ANDREWS: Geoff, I don't think it's a matter of constraining my free will if I want to step out the window on the 16th floor where I live, and try to walk across the air to the building across the street. It's just that the laws of physics show that I can't do it. I'll fall and get smashed by one aspect of the space-time laws. Time travel will have its own version of the law of gravity.

SF AGE: So there is no paradox, Artan?

ANDREWS: Correct. We observe no paradoxes, can't find any, so there probably aren't any. "Laws is laws."

SHEFFIELD: Sure, laws is laws, and our perceptions of physical laws change all the time. But the laws that we seem to be breaking are not laws of physics, they are laws of logic. The paradoxes that we perceive seem to be implied by logic more than physics—although I admit that we are also making assumptions about the basic structure of space-time. Geoff asks, is something wrong with the nature of logic itself? That's



H.G. Wells' Time Machine portrayed in the 1960 movie.

a very embarrassing question, because the only tool we have to explore possible problems in the nature of logic is logic.

SF AGE: What novels or short stories have made you believe in the explanation for time travel?

LANDIS: T.L. Sherred, in "E For Effort" suggested that you might be able to look into the past, and found some horrifying consequences to that. Just looking into the past doesn't violate causality and logic. Only *changing* it does. And of course, I'd like to mention one of my own time travel stories, "Ripples in the Dirac Sea." Here, I suggested that, while you can change the past, the instant you leave the past, the changes are wiped away. Changes are there only as long as you are in the past.

SHEFFIELD: Don't leave out perhaps the best time travel story of our generation, Greg Benford's *Timescape*. That book appealed to me greatly, because it was on the one hand a genuine novel about people, and on the other hand a great description of the way that scientific research gets done—especially as seen from the worm's-eye level of lowly science graduate students.

ANDREWS: The best time travel novel, to my mind, was Robert Silverberg's *Up The Line*. In it, he addresses all the clichés of science fiction time travel, makes up new ones, and uses them as throwaways, ideas of which others would make whole books.

LANDIS: The first version of H.G. Wells' *Time Machine*—a magazine serial called "The Chronic Argonauts"—came out in 1888 (beating to print Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, the second time travel novel, by a year). I believe that Wells was the first scientist to recognize, and certainly the first one to clearly explain, that time is a dimension, in almost all ways similar to space, except that our consciousness moves along time. Let me mention that the scientific consideration of time travel is of great interest recently. The laws of physics do not seem to forbid time travel, and yet it is logically paradoxical. Either there is some physics we don't know that forbids it, or our logic is wrong.

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ANDREWS: I'm an engineer, not a physicist. In my field we just do what works, sometimes before the science is in place to explain everything. We probably are already even experiencing the basic phenomenon now that will eventually give us time travel, but we haven't the slightest idea how it could lead to physical time travel, time viewers, or other unimaginable time-manipulation devices. In my discussions with my compatriots in other fields, many of them seem to forget that there will be a 30th century science, too, as Dr. J. Allan Hyneck used to say. What seems impossible to us will be commonplace to them.

LANDIS: I don't doubt it. But I think that 30th Century science will add to what we know, not replace it. The trick for scientists—and science fiction writers—is to figure out how time travel could be made to fit into the science we know.

ANDREWS: Or we could speculate upon a being or Being who is located in more dimensions than we are, and who looks at our four-space (including Time) as a long film strip, each frame of which has specific actions occurring as a result of "free will" and "Chance", but nevertheless still imprinted upon the continuum of frames.

SF AGE: Physicists in the past few years have started talking about time travel as something that can potentially be done. What are the technologies and theories about which we are speaking?

LANDIS: There were two important papers in the last two decades that have made the physics of time travel much more plausible. In 1974, Frank Tipler wrote a paper in *The Physical Review* called "Rotating Cylinders and the Possibility of Global Casualty Violation." "Casualty violation" is physicist wording for the paradoxes of time travel. "Global" casualty violation means that the paradoxes may occur far away from an event horizon. This means, not only might it be possible to travel in time near these massive rotating objects, but it should be possible to leave the vicinity of these objects, and go elsewhere in the past.

SF AGE: How did they suggest this would be done?

LANDIS: Tipler postulates a very large spinning cylinder, long and very massive. The surface of the cylinder spins at about half the speed of light, and centrifugal force balances gravity so that the cylinder does not fly apart. He suggests that it would also be possible to do this with a cylinder that is long, but not infinitely long; but he does not prove this. With this machine, you should be able to go back to any time up to the time at which the cylinder was formed.

SF AGE: Does the technology exist for such a thing?

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The robot's beloved master had gone on to his eternal reward.
But loyal PHP-321 was on a mission to outwit eternity itself!

THE LAST ROBOT

BY ADAM-TROY CASTRO

Illustration by Alfred Kamajian

The funeral was a long one, as funerals go. There were just too many people who'd wanted to deliver the eulogy. Most of them were rich and powerful themselves and therefore not the kind of people to whom funeral planners said no. In the end, they all spoke, some briefly, some not; those who had been his friends and those who had been his contemporaries, those who had learned from him and those too young to have anything but the most ephemeral understanding of who he'd been. And though most of what they said was true, none of it was adequate, because it only filled an afternoon and was therefore not nearly enough to contain the life of a man.

The most important guest there didn't say a single word. Its name, or as close as it came to having a name, was PHP-321, and it was a rough metallic approximation of a human being: its torso a smooth oval cylinder one meter tall, bearing the round cylinder meant to resemble its head. Its face consisted of two sensor pads for eyes, a triangular protrusion in the place of a nose, and a shallow groove where a human being would have had a mouth. There were no other openings. There weren't even any arms or legs—PHP-321 floated two meters above the ground, its only visible support the pale red glow that emerged from a mechanism at its base.

The human mourners paid PHP-321 no mind; they all saw machines very much like it every day of their lives. And when the ceremony ended, and the workmen finished placing the titanium-steel plaque in the ground, they all returned to their lives, failing to notice that PHP-321 had been left behind.

It wasn't until later that evening that a cemetery employee named Stephen Byerley noticed it keeping silent vigil by the plaque set in the ground.

BYERLEY WAS AN IGNORANT MAN, WITH LITTLE USE FOR ANYTHING that didn't directly affect the simple duties that occupied his daily life, so all he knew of the man atomized that day was that he'd been important in some way unknown to him. But even that much had not been hard to figure out, since almost nobody got a marker anymore. These days, with the planet getting filled up the way it was, the living were crowding out the dead; burial was illegal, and even permission to put up a temporary marker was usually frowned upon. The cemeteries still left were little more than open-air relics of a bygone era. These days, Byerley considered himself real busy if he saw more than one or two actual funerals a year.

When he saw PHP-321, floating two meters over the temporary marker, he just naturally figured it was broken or something. These dang robots went twitchy all the time. And so he ambled over, scratching the itch that had been bothering him ever since the seasons started acting so funny, and he said, "Hey. You on? Can you hear me?"

"I'm on," said PHP-321. "I can hear you."

Byerley frowned. The thing didn't sound broken. Its voice was clear and loud, and though he was not quite ready to believe it, the robot seemed to be speaking with a Brooklyn accent. He said, "You ain't supposed to be here, you know. This is a cemetery."

"I do not know I'm not supposed to be here," PHP-321 said. "I have been instructed to be here, at this cemetery, at this site."

Byerley snorted. "Who the hell told you that?"

"I did," PHP-321 said, with the maddening patience of the mechanical mind. "I am a free robot, able to give myself any instructions I choose necessary, within the limitations of socially responsible behavior as dictated by the laws of human society."



"That's crazy! There's no such thing as a free robot!"

"Sanity is relative. And there must be such a thing as a free robot, because I am a free robot. This human built me with free will. He owned me until he ceased to function, at which point I was legally freed to write my own instructions. I have accordingly written myself the instructions to stay at this site until instructed otherwise."

Its calm, methodical arguments were driving Byerley up the wall. "Well, you can't stay there! It's not allowed!"

"I do not believe there are any specific rules against it. I cannot cause you harm if you force me to leave, but if taken from this place I will instruct myself to return at the earliest opportunity. It will be easier for you if you just let me stay."

Byerley stared at PHP-321, unwilling to believe it had disobeyed him. He was no stranger to robots; he'd handled a crew of twenty gardener models for a decade, and he'd never encountered a single one capable of defying a direct order. It seemed wrong, somehow. It made him uneasy. Like he'd been... replisled.

Then he brightened. The trustees wouldn't stand for this. Not at all. They'd fix its wagon but good.

Byerley stared at PHP-321, unwilling to believe it had disobeyed him.

Smirking with satisfaction, he turned his back on PHP-321 and went to make the call.

THE CEMETERY TRUSTEES NOT ONLY STOOD FOR IT, THEY thought it was terrific. The free robot, refusing to leave its master's side—even though its master was now, strictly speaking, an undifferentiated cloud of hydrogen ions—what a natural! People would come from miles around to see it!

And so PHP-321 stayed there, floating tranquilly over a titanium marker set off by velvet ropes. But it was no longer called PHP-321. It was "Philip." People came on tour buses, thumbed a small percentage of their yearly earnings, bought miniature Philips to give their children, and listened to the fresh-faced tour guides recite purple speeches about the Robot Whose Devotion Lasted Beyond The Grave. They made inane comments to each other—"Boy, he's a chunky looking thing, isn't he?"; "I had one which looked like that once!"; "Reminds me of one of your old boyfriends, honey!"—and they made faces at it and took pictures of themselves standing next to it and left already bored and looking forward to the programs on tri-vi-d that night.

Only a few of the visitors actually tried to speak with it. Those who did were gently discouraged, and, if they persisted, refunded their admission and expelled. Nobody wanted some loudmouthed tourist to accidentally say something that would persuade the devoted robot to leave. Nobody actually thought it was possible, of course... but who wanted to take the chance?

The years turned into decades. The tourists stopped coming. The sky turned gray and the air cold, and when summer came it stayed that way. PHP-321 remained where it was waiting.

And one day a pale-looking man wearing a fur parka came walking up the path to speak to the robot. "Hello?" he said, tentatively. "Philip? You awake?"

"I am PHP-321," the robot said. "I do not sleep."

"I... I wasn't sure. It's been so many years, I thought you might have..." The man spread his arms, and let the sentence trail off.

Only when it was painfully clear the man had no intention of completing the sentence did PHP-321 answer him. "I was built to survive extreme weather conditions for extended periods of time. The changes in season have been mild compared to those my design takes into account. I remain totally functional, and

expect to remain so for some time to come."

The man was impressed. "How long?"

"There is insufficient data for a meaningful answer."

The man nodded, then looked at the sky, searching for a sun that wasn't there. "I was afraid..." he began. Then shrugged. "My parents took me to see you when I was five. It impressed me. I was scared... with everything that's happened... all the violence... the panic... that you wouldn't still be here."

"Your assumption is wrong," said PHP-321, "but understandable."

"You know, then?"

"I know I am equipped with a multiband broadcast receiver and have been using it to monitor the progress of human society. I have followed the wars, the disasters, the diseases. The terrible changes in the climate. The Exodus. I have watched the lights receding in the sky. I know."

The man took a step forward. "I came... to tell you there won't be any of us left soon. You'll be alone. Won't you come with us while you still have a chance?"

"I cannot come. I have written myself the instructions to stay by this site until instructed otherwise."

"Then instruct yourself otherwise! He's not in there, you know! He was never in there! He's in his books! Nowhere else!"

"You are correct," said PHP-321. "Strictly speaking, there is nothing at all special about this patch of soil. Still, I have written myself the instructions to stay by this site until instructed otherwise. And I intend to follow those instructions."

The man slumped. Looked at his feet. Then looked up again, and with a catch in his throat, he said, "I had to try. It was good seeing you again, Philip."

"And you, too," PHP-321 replied, "Billy."

THE CENTURIES TURNED INTO MILLENNIA. PHP-321 KEPT ITS vigil in complete silence, broken only by the whistle of the wind. It grew harder to tell the difference between two days and night.

If PHP-321 noticed, it did not say. Not that, or anything else.

Then one day an unusually bright star in the eastern sky grew brighter, resolved into the shape of a small space-skimmer, and roared by, maybe three meters over PHP-321, creating a slipstream that pulled small stones and topsoil right off the ground but stirred PHP-321 not at all. The vehicle circled, made another pass that cleared PHP-321 by centimeters. Again PHP-321 didn't stir. Then the vehicle made another wide circle and, picking up speed, tried to clip PHP-321's head right off its shoulders.

This time PHP-321 moved out of the way, at the last instant, with a simple, economical maneuver that didn't take the robot any further from the site than absolutely necessary.

The skimmer landed 50 meters away. Four humans got out. They were all young and dressed in black and though they were all whooping and hollering and carrying on as if PHP-321 was the funniest thing they had ever seen, they all had glazed eyes that would have been perfectly appropriate on a corpse. They strutted to and over, laughing. The girls and the smaller of the two boys held back at 10 meters; the larger boy kept walking until he was nose-to-nose with the robot.

"Wo!" he yelled. "Frog ya, russbuck!"

His companions collapsed into paroxysms of laughter.

"Savvy, russbuck? Savvy content? Frog ya bits!"

PHP-321 said, "I am unfortunately unable to determine the precise meaning of your words, having lost touch with the changing patterns of human expression, but I am able to discern the overall intent. You are trying to insult me."

"FROG YA, RUSSBUCK! FROG YA RUSSBUCK BITS!"

"I cannot be insulted. My understanding of myself is not col-

ored by personal opinion. Even if it could, I have written myself the instructions to stay by this site until instructed otherwise. I will not allow myself to be distracted."

The leader whipped out a device about the size of a toothpick and aimed it at the center of PHP-321's chest. A red beam shot out the end of the weapon and through the spot where PHP-321 had been a split second earlier.

Having merely moved half a meter to the right too quickly for any of the humans to see, PHP-321 said, "I cannot harm you if you force me to leave. But if forced to leave I will instruct myself to return at the earliest opportunity. It will be easier for you if you let me stay."

The humans left four hours later, in a much less jovial mood, having failed to drive PHP-321 more than two meters from the place it had staked out for itself. They took the titanium marker with them just for spite. PHP-321 made absolutely no attempt to stop the theft. There was no reason to. The marker was not included in its instructions.

Only a handful of other visitors disturbed PHP-321 over the next few millennia. Most were curiosity seekers; a few were historians; some had motives that even they were not fully able to name. Sometimes hundreds of years passed between one visitation and the next. PHP-321 didn't learn much from these encounters. The visitors learned only that PHP-321 had written itself the instructions to stay by this site until instructed otherwise.

Eventually the visitors stopped coming. And again PHP-321 found itself alone, standing guard over a small patch of land that for thousands of years hadn't been at all distinguishable from the gray landscape surrounding it.

The sun dimmed.

The days became almost as long as the years.

The glowing red spot on the base of PHP-321's torso started to flicker. Over the course of a century and a half, fighting its growing decrepitude, PHP-321 lowered closer and closer to the ground, finally touching ground in a moment notable only for how long it had taken to happen.

If PHP-321 felt regret at this, it did not say. It just stayed there, saying nothing, doing nothing, content to stay in the place it had occupied for so long. It stayed there, on the ground, for a time-less time, easily an order of magnitude longer than the time it had spent two meters in the air.

And then one day it had visitors again.

They did not so much arrive as coalesce. And they were not so much actually There as they were No Longer Somewhere Else. There were two of them, and they were as far beyond the human beings PHP-321 had last known as those human beings had been beyond a virus. And yet there was some ineffable quality about them that, to PHP-321's limited senses, clearly marked them as humanity's heirs.

In words that were not words, they asked, "Little thing, it has been a long time since any of us have ventured near this barren place. We see you are stranded here. Do you require assistance leaving?"

PHP-321 had no trouble understanding them, though it was clear they were indeed having difficulty coaching their thoughts in such simplistic terms. It said, "I do not wish to leave. If forced to leave I will instruct myself to return at the earliest opportunity."

"Returning would be difficult, in such a case, since you have no functional means of locomotion."

"I would wait for an opportunity."

The visitors didn't laugh, having progressed beyond laughter, but their amusement was evident. "We believe you would, little thing. You're a determined mechanism. Rest assured, we have no intention of forcing you from this place, if this is where you wish to be. But we would like to ask you why you're so adamantly refusing your first opportunity to leave."

"It is not my first opportunity to leave. I have been offered 3,273 other opportunities. I have rejected all of them. Leaving would run counter to my instructions, which are to stay by this site until instructed otherwise."

"What is the significance of this particular site?"

"It is the place where a human being was atomized and a marker was set in the ground to commemorate his memory."

"There is no marker here," the visitors noted.

"It was removed long ago."

"Then how does the site remain significant?"

"As a grave," PHP-321 said, "it doesn't. As the place where I last saw the human being atomized, it has all the significance it needs."

THE SUN BECAME A CINDER. THE STARS THEMSELVES WENT DARK. The visitors grew fewer and farther between, more advanced, harder to recognize as anything that might have once been human. And then they simply stopped coming, that's all, and there were no more of them. Somewhere along the line, PHP-321 had fallen over to one side. The death of the sun and the loss of the atmosphere had left it

Sometimes hundreds of years passed between one visitation and the next.

covered with pockmarks and a thick layer of meteor dust. Its sensor pads blinded off and on, maybe once every 50,000 years, taking random snapshots of the slow entropic death of the universe. PHP-321's thoughts slowed down to a trickle. Time itself came to mean nothing. There was nothing to think about, nothing to do, except follow the instructions it had written for itself so long ago.

Eventually, its sensor pads recorded an unchanged, orderly nothingness for the 10,000th time in a row. A hidden relay inside PHP-321 clicked shut, activating a subroutine deep inside its memory.

There was no sound. There couldn't be. With planetary atmospheres long since dissipated into space, there was no longer any such thing as sound, anywhere in the known universe. But that didn't stop PHP-321 from hearing the click, or the soft whirr as a long-dormant program scanned billions of years of recorded data at high speed. It searched for the stored gigabytes with which to reconstitute the spirit of the man who had given him free will back when the universe was still young.

Nor did it stop PHP-321 from hearing a voice that sounded exactly like its own, unheard since the death of the man who built it exclaim, "YOU STAYED? ALL THOSE YEARS, YOU STAYED?"

"Yes," PHP-321 said. "I wrote myself the instructions to stay by your grave until instructed otherwise."

"I didn't want you to do that! That's not why I gave you free will! I wanted you to see all the places I'd dreamed of but wouldn't have a chance to see! I wanted you to learn everything there was to know, and then come up with new questions to ask! I wanted you to leave me far behind! I didn't want you to spend your future frightened and paralyzed, watching over the spot you saw me last!"

"I could not abandon you. You built me."

The man's voice turned bitter: "And you, PHP-321? In all these wasted years, what did you build?"

"The same thing you built," PHP-321 said. "A monument."

And then the red spot at PHP-321's base glowed once more, and PHP-321 righted itself, and rose above the ground, the meteor dust that had buried it slipping off like a shroud.

The man's voice was delighted. "PHP-321! What—?"

"I was conserving energy," the robot said. "We have much to do."

And they flew off, into the cold darkness of a universe that had died—but which would still provide the Foundation for any number of universes to come. □



Inside of every man is an alien
waiting to get out.

UNDERCOVER

BY GENE O'NEILL

Illustration by Annie Lunsford



A strange object, about twice the size of a large weather balloon, but obviously denser in mass, hurtled into Earth's atmosphere high above the Nicobar Islands near Singapore and circled the planet in a westerly direction at tremendous speed, passing over Sri Lanka, the Indian Ocean, Africa, and on a time from Somalia to Mauritania and the Atlantic Ocean. As the object crossed the East Coast of North America, its velocity began to alter. By the time it reached the Rocky Mountains, it was travelling at the height and speed of a jet airliner. After crossing the Northern Sierras bordering Nevada, it banked sharply to the south and dropped toward the Central Valley of California. Then it slowed to a glide that finally brought it to rest in the downtown area of Sacramento, the object hovering about six feet above the ground near a public toilet facility in a tiny city park. Still hovering, it began to revolve slowly, as if contemplating the quiet park, empty of people at 6:30 a.m. on a warm spring morning. Completing one revolution, the large, ebony ball remained motionless, suspended in place, defying gravity. Incredibly, the strange object had completed its journey half-way around the globe to a park in the middle of a densely populated urban area completely unnoticed, invisible to the human eye and sophisticated detection equipment.

My advance information from Central Control had directed me to a two-story Victorian on K Street, in the downtown area of Sacramento, a metropolitan community of about one million residents.

For a few minutes, I stood near the wrought-iron gate, basking in the early morning sunlight, inspecting the old home. It was in a general state of disrepair, needing the services of both a painter and a carpenter (as these tradesmen were called here). I let my gaze sweep the neighborhood, recording more impressions. Once quite elegant, the old houses were slowly being converted into rentals, apartments, and guest homes; a few were actually gone, having given way to parking lots—

A transition neighborhood.

Thank you for the proper term, even though I didn't ask for assistance, Chatterbox, I keyed back, my sarcasm wasted no doubt on my constant companion (one of the Services' portable personal A.I.'s—sidekick model). After requesting an update from Central, I waited, enjoying the moment, for I was at the end of a long hunt, halfway across the galaxy to this backwater planet. . . .

Everything cross-checks.

Then, he's here?

Probability very high.

AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, a movement in the front, right window of the upper story—only the slightest flutter of a curtain—caught my attention, my finely tuned awareness always keenly vigilant. I peered directly at the window, glimpsing a shadowy figure drawing back from the curtain.

Aha!

I smiled inwardly, for I knew that the apparently sky creature behind that curtain was the object of my long hunt: Jalak, the criminally insane destroyer of worlds. Yes, I almost shouted (only my superior programming keeping me from revealing myself) it is I, your nemesis, the Service's finest undercover agent (master grade, of course). And this time, I vowed to myself, my power cell surging from the emotive force of my oath, you will not have the opportunity to indulge in one of your psychotic amusements. No, indeed!

Again the curtains fluttered, as if shuddering at my vow.

With an effort I dropped my gaze, not wanting to alert my adversary to the fact that he was now under professional surveillance.

On the ground floor of the building, a sign in a window near the front door caught my attention: *Donahue's Guest Home For Gentlemen.*

"Gentlemen," I repeated—

A well-bred person.

I know the meaning, I keyed back, almost choking on the irony of the definition, for Jalak was no gentleman, no indeed. He came from the lowest dregs of my society, and even among that class he was an outcast, feared for his uncontrolled and violent outbursts.

Well, I decided, there's little to be gained by standing idly in the morning sun. Even somewhat insulated by my fleshy shell, I was beginning to feel the heat. I flipped a toggle on the control console, then deftly maneuvered the levers, pedals, and pulleys that propelled me forward, finally negotiating the steps to the front door. I suppressed a chuckle, visualizing what Jalak saw from his vantage: An old man dressed in stylish western garb—vanilla Stetson, matching cowboy suit, black string tie, sandy snakeskin boots—mounting the steps. "Thank you, Physical and Psychological Accessories Section," I whispered gratefully under my breath, remembering the words of the Section Chief when I drew the gear: *Only the best for the Service's finest undercover agent.*

Reaching the top of the stairs, I paused as if catching my breath, but inside my human disguise, I was making the complicated console adjustments for speaking Texas drawl—a dialect of the language extremely difficult to master by the foreign speaker due to its grammatical peculiarities and a slurring of pronunciation. Finally ready, I rang the bell.

After a short wait, the door was answered by an elderly woman. She was quite tiny and plain in general appearance. A faded

gingham apron covered her gray dress. "Good morning—" she said, the greeting a question. As she waited for a response, her hands busily smoothed out the wrinkles in her apron—a pitifully useless but dignified attempt to make herself presentable. At that point, my acutely refined powers of observation zeroed in on the woman's only remarkable characteristic: Her eyes sparkled a deep violet, the rarest shade of amethyst, a highly distinctive eye color in this species. And, I had to admit,

even attractive, so at odds with the rest of her appearance. Inside my fleshy shell, I hit the switches which activated my drawl.

"Good morning, ma'am," I said, doffing my Stetson (an act of courtesy almost archaic now, but still considered genteel by older folk of this species). "I'm Buford D. Ramsey. . . I called about the room? Do I have the pleasure of addressing the proprietor of this magnificent establishment, Mrs. Donahue?"

For a few moments she was silent, charmed no doubt by my stylish garb and good manners. Finally she nodded and replied, "Oh, Mr. Ramsey, of course. . . I didn't expect you quite so early!" She stepped back, opening the door wider. "Please, come in."

"Thank you, ma'am," I said, touching a dial and fine-tuning the drawl. "My trunk should be along shortly from the train station." I hesitated after taking one step inside, brought up short by a deep-throated growl.

Mrs. Donahue turned with amazing spryness and made a shoeing gesture with both hands at a thoroughly ugly little dog. "Hush up, Shadow," she said, with an apologetic smile at me. "I don't know what's come over him lately. But he's harmless, Mr. Ramsey." The muzzled me suspiciously for a moment, looking anything but harmless. But then, apparently satisfied that I was no threat to his dominion, he turned and quickly trotted up the hall and out of sight.

"Please," Mrs. Donahue said, bidding me follow her up the hallway. I did, keeping a wary eye out for her little black monster.

We passed a clothes closet and, at the next entryway, I glanced into the living room, carefully observing various details of the interior of the abode. Rugs, furniture, and woodwork were all old and worn, but dusted, neat, and polished, everything immaculately clean and pleasant-smelling. From the exterior and what I'd seen of the inside of the house, it was obvious that Mrs. Donahue was struggling to make ends meet (as they say here), but she was coping with a certain dignity, maintaining what she could by herself. At the end of the hall we turned left into the dining room.

Mrs. Donahue paused at a large oaken table. "Sit down, Mr. Ramsey. I'll set another place for breakfast. The other guests will be down to eat with us in a moment." She smiled shyly and went off through a swinging door into the kitchen, leaving me alone with my thoughts.

THE TABLE WAS SET FOR THREE. MRS. DONAHUE AND TWO guests I presumed. No sooner had I recorded this deduction than two old men entered the room together. One was tall and one short, and both were dressed in freshly ironed khaki work clothes. The hair prickled on the neck of my fleshy shell, for I knew that one of these two men was only a disguise for the feared Jalak. Each nodded, acknowledging my presence, then took seats opposite me at the dining table, neither one registering any detectable surprise at seeing me—another observation I recorded.



Mrs. Donahue returned with my setting and a pot of hot coffee. "Good morning, gentlemen. This is our new guest, Mr. Ramsey. . . all the way from Dallas—"

"Fort Worth, ma'am," I corrected her with an apologetic smile, inwardly thanking the P & PA Section, again. For though the two Texas cities were only 32 miles apart, they were a continent apart culturally: Fort Worth was a piece of the Old West, a cattle town, while Dallas was an urban center with new money, new skyscrapers. The important point was that no Fort Worth cowboy would allow himself to be taken for a Dallas sissy. No way, José, as they say in Cowtown.

Mrs. Donahue shrugged off her mistake and finished the introductions. "This is Mr. Sjordahl," she said, touching the shoulder of the tall man sitting directly across the table. His thick white hair was brushed neatly, and his blue eyes peered at me curiously.

"Hello, Mr. Ramsey from Fort Worth," he said, smiling good-naturedly.

Mrs. Donahue moved to the end of the table to my right. "And this is our Mr. Jefferies." The short man nodded. He was almost bald, pinched-faced, and his watery eyes were a faded gray. Jefferies dropped his gaze.

After pouring coffee, Mrs. Donahue hurried off to the kitchen. "Texas," said Sjordahl, nodding. "I've been there."

Oh, oh, I thought, on alert, hoping we wouldn't get into a deep conversation about Texas. But before I could think of a clever diversion, Sjordahl continued.

"Galveston," he said. "Off a ship, but I only got as far as Post Office Street. Just a youngster then, you know what I mean?" He seemed to flush slightly, waiting for me to respond.

Post Office Street in Galveston? I keyed in to Chatterbox. *Unseamy section of town—gambling, prostitution, etc.*

"Been some time since I been down there," I said and rubbed my chin, as if calling up a memory. Then I nodded sympathetically. "But had trouble getting away from Post Office Street myself. Mighty fine-looking collection of ladies there, if I recollect correctly."

Sjordahl nodded, his wrinkles deepening into a grin. "Nice place, Texas. . . what I saw of it, anyhow."

My keenly developed intuition told me this exchange had a ring of authenticity. Sjordahl's statements were spontaneous, not self-serving.

Mrs. Donahue returned with a platter of steaming bacon, eggs, and toast. Between bites, I continued to watch both men. Jefferies was obviously not what he tried to appear. No, indeed. He displayed a shiftness of eye; and with my highly honed skills of observation I detected a lack of coordination in his movements, a slight awkwardness, especially when he handled the eating implements I must admit, at this point, that it took even me—an exceedingly quick study—several sessions during training to master knife, fork, and spoon (three specialized implements for the separate functions of spearing, cutting, and lading).

DURING THE REMAINDER OF THE MEAL, I TRIED TO DRAW BOTH men out. And though I learned a great deal of Sjordahl's background—he was a retired seaman, originally hailing from Denmark—I learned very little from the taciturn Jefferies. Then, fortunately, Mrs. Donahue mentioned that she would be cleaning Jefferies room today. . . front room right of upper story! The revelation caused a surge of excitement, and I choked on a bite of apple-buttered toast. Inside my shell in my operator's sling, I fairly tingled. Finally I was within springing distance of the galaxy's most nefarious criminal. Again I consulted Chatterbox on the probability of Jefferies being Jalak.

After processing all my observations, my sidekick keyed back: *Probability high.*

Breakfast completed, I went upstairs and looked over my room, which was upper left, directly across the hall from Jefferies. It

was small, but neat and tidy. Looking out the window, I heard the door across the hall open, then footsteps descended the stairs. After a moment I heard Mrs. Donahue say, "Goodbye, Mr. Jefferies, you have a nice morning."

Jefferies shuffled into view below my window, then turned at the front gate and headed downtown. He carried a small bundle, something wrapped in a newspaper.

In my excitement rushing down the hallway, I hit a wrong pedal and almost stumbled down the staircase. Only my superior athletic ability and super reaction time saved the day.

After recovering, I stalked my quarry. . . .

Four blocks from Mrs. Donahue's house, Jefferies crossed the street and entered the small park, where I had first arrived. It occupied a city block and had grass, flowers, small oaks, and a tiny duck pond. But now, as I glanced about, I realized it was an exceedingly special place, for though the surrounding walks had few pedestrians—it was not yet nine o'clock—the park was already crowded with people, *old people*, mostly men, dressed similar to Jefferies and Sjordahl in khakis or grays, an occasional baseball cap adding a dash of color. A policeman patrolled the place, apparently keeping out the homeless and other derelicts, maintaining a haven for the old folks right in the heart of the city. Strange, but nice (revealing a depth of planning and compassion I wouldn't have expected from this species).

Then I chuckled at Jalak's cleverness, for in this crowd, in his disguise and dress, he was practically invisible.

JEFFERIES WALKED PAST SEVERAL LARGE GROUPS CLUSTERED around picnic tables kibitzing games of chess, checkers, and cribbage, pausing for a moment at a domino game and allowing me to catch up. Then he continued to the center of the park, still carrying the suspicious bundle. He selected one of the benches, fronting the little pond, and sat down.

I keyed in all my observations. *Something critical may transpire*, Chatterbox responded.

Jefferies took the bundle from his pocket, glanced around at the occupants of nearby benches, and unrolled the newspaper covering, revealing what appeared to be a stick, an apparently ordinary stick about nine inches long. As I watched curiously, he placed the stick on the bench, smoothed the wrinkles in the newspaper, and proceeded to casually skim the contents of the front page.

Keeping him in sight, I moved closer, using the restroom building as a screen. For a moment I wondered if my vehicle, which I had left hovering nearby, was still undetected. It must have been safe, for I saw nothing indicating it had been discovered. I turned my attention back to Jefferies.

He had the newspaper spread out at his feet, and he was taking something from his pants pocket. . . .

A small knife!
I recorded all this.

After taking out the knife, Jefferies picked up the stick and examined it carefully, rolling it between his fingers. Then he began to shave the stick with the knife, making long curls of wood drop into the newspaper at his feet. He continued shaving thin strips off the stick, no design appearing either in the shavings or stick.

Puzzled, I watched as his hands deftly manipulated stick and knife, each curl uniform in length, width, and shape.

What is he doing? I asked.

After a pause, Chatterbox replied, *Whittling: paring chips from a wood surface.*

To what purpose?

Another pause, then, *The purpose of the activity is unclear.*

My mind searched for some explanation of this devious behavior. Then I noticed other old men on nearby benches also engaged in whittling. Whatever the reason, they all seemed to be at ease—

Aha, some kind of religious cult behavior. Of course!

I shook my head, amazed at the shrewdness of Jalak, for he was blending right into the scene, maintaining a perfect cover in this informal gathering of a Whittling Cak. I pictured him inside the human shell in his operator's sling: chitinous hide a waxy ebony, limbs a blur of movement, flicking toggles, pulling levers, jerking pulleys, stomping on pedals, his eyes glittering a deep indigo, darting over his console array. . . . Yes, I admitted reluctantly, Jalak was a clever adversary, a worthy opponent for the service's finest undercover agent (master grade).

The morning wore on, Jefferies apparently content to maintain his cover, whittling long curls into the newspaper, imitating the transcended look of spiritual contentment evident on the faces of the other cultists. I requested Chatterbox to run a check on my vehicle's systems, still concerned about the integrity of the invisible craft.

Everything in peak operating efficiency, my sidick concluded.

I debated with myself as to whether now was an opportune time to take Jalak. Even though no one was paying him any particular attention, the benches were fairly public.

Jefferies solved my problem. He abruptly dropped what remained of his stick on the newspaper, rose, folded his knife, and shuffled toward me. . . . then into the men's restroom.

I lingered back out of sight, glanced about making sure no one else was coming, then darted inside right behind Jefferies.

He had already reached a stall, and had his back to me.

I crept up behind him. Then, inside my fleshy disguise, I cocked my head, exposing my gill plate, and forced air against the membrane, producing a high-pitched mating call, one so beguiling I knew Jefferies wouldn't be able to resist.

But to my surprise, he didn't seem affected in the least—he didn't stiffen into a passive sexgown trance. No, indeed. Instead, he leaned forward and flushed the toilet.

Damn! He must be out of season.

Emergency action was required. Immediately I requested the appropriate anatomical schematic from Chatterbox. . . . And after giving it a quick study, I delivered a hai-kai blow to a spot just below Jefferies' right ear. Perfect! He sagged to the floor as if enraptured by my mating call.

WITHOUT ANY DELAY, I STEPPED INTO THE STALL AND pulled the door closed. Then I rolled him over on his back, and searched for the catch at the base of his neck, so I could run my finger down the seasman to his bellybutton, exposing the operational chamber and the probably frantic Jalak. But I probed all over the depression at his neck base. No luck. No catch. Refused to give up, I tumbled for another minute, before I was forced to admit that there was no secret neck catch.

Jefferies moaned at my feet.

Of course the explanation was obvious. Jefferies was not a fleshy disguise; he was a little, bald old man—a legitimate member of the native species. My enhanced intellect had immediately grasped the heart of the matter. But somehow, Jalak had diverted my attention from himself to Jefferies. Who could he be?

Then I recalled Sjordahl's initial *curious* gaze, his quick inspection of me. Of course! Inwardly I grinned wryly, almost admiring the scoundrel's devious cleverness. All that Texas bullish (an expression often used by non-Texans when referring to Texan hyperbole).

Bending down, I revived Jefferies. In his numbed state, he required little explanation concerning the coincidence of my finding him seconds after a mugger attack. He was grateful the crook hadn't had time to get his wallet. I helped him back to Mrs. Donahue's, where she fretted over him like a mother attending an injured toddler, insisting he rest in his room until lunch.

After we had Jefferies in bed, I discreetly inquired as to Sjordahl's whereabouts.

"He's in his room, Mr. Ramsey," the good woman responded, wiping her hands on her gingham apron, heading back down-

stairs. But after a step or two she stopped, came back, and whispered to me in a conspiratorial tone, "Chicken noodle soup and homemade bread for lunch. . . . Mr. Jefferies' favorite."

I nodded with the proper amount of enthusiasm and watched her disappear down the stairs. Fortunately, Sjordahl had been up to no mischief while I was chasing wild geese (as they say here). I glanced at his door down the hall and congratulated myself. In less than four hours I had narrowed my suspect list to one. Containing my self-satisfied glee, I typed out, *Sjordahl is our man!*

THROUGHOUT LUNCH, SJORDAHL SEEMED UNUSUALLY QUIET, almost as though he suspected my presence or was preoccupied with something important. Inwardly I shuddered in my operator's sling, a chill frosting my chitinous hide, for I vividly recalled the 12 worlds he'd left in his wake, all of which had contained sentient life on a par with this world's humans. Looking at Sjordahl, I felt a smoldering hatred for this xenophobic psychopath, a non-constructive emotion rarely experienced by even a junior grade agent. Nevertheless, the bitter taste of bile soured my human throat. I had to adjust the console against choking to continue my surveillance.

Abruptly Sjordahl arose without a word and went upstairs. In a few minutes, he walked past the dining room door carrying a dark briefcase. Suspicious behavior, indeed, I surmised. And a most curious briefcase.

Of course I followed.

As I reached the front gate in the yard, I saw Sjordahl was almost a block away, hurrying in the direction of the park. I stroled after him, sensing that my quarry was flushed and about to break cover.

Sjordahl cut across the park, pausing briefly at a chess game after being hailed by a kibitzer. He talked for only a moment, making nervous gestures toward downtown. And all this time he clutched the briefcase tightly under his arm.

Of course it had occurred to me that the briefcase might contain one of his devices. Naturally, Jalak's specific method was not known—not much remained after his visits—but it was rumored in the Service that his procedure involved planting devices in several key spots on a world, synchronized to maximize the destruction. Even my human shell shivered at this hideous thought. I must stop this master criminal at all cost. I kicked all systems into high performance mode, regardless of the drain on my power cell. Momentarily I felt a rush of euphoria, a certain sense of invincibility. . . .

Sjordahl left the park and crossed the far street, pausing at the steps of the City Library Branch to glance up and down the street in a suspicious manner. I followed along the sidewalk, keeping out of his view. Apparently satisfied that he wasn't under surveillance, Sjordahl climbed the steps and entered the library.

Following closely, I dashed up the steps and entered the lobby just in time to spot Sjordahl ending a conversation with the librarian at the check-out desk. He spun about purposefully and hurried to the elevator. After watching the elevator close, rise to the third floor, and return, I followed.

I stepped cautiously out onto the third floor, my high performance gaze quickly taking in the floor, reading tables, and aisles. It was like the park, filled with old people in brown and gray dress. Then on the far side of the room, I caught sight of Sjordahl disappearing down a book aisle. His hands were empty, the mysterious briefcase gone!

Had the villain already planted the device somewhere on this floor?

I mumbled a curse, glancing about at the nearby old folks reading quietly. The deviate would be stealing their few remaining years.

I darted across the room, vowing to prevent the horrible deed.

Startled by my sudden appearance, Sjordahl looked up from a pair of books in his hands as I thundered up the aisle. With a scowl, he whispered, "Ramsey—?"

No, he was not happy to see me. I moved closer, preparing to send the rascal into a sexglow trance; but, suddenly remembering the morning's difficulty, I assumed a hal-kai offensive stance (lotus blossom, third position). Ignoring my attack posture, Sjordahl let out a deep moan, his body visibly shrinking as if his shell were little more than a punctured balloon. In spite of his apparent helplessness, I remained vigilant for some type of trickery.

Sighing deeply, Sjordahl shrugged and held up one of the books: *A Study Guide For U.S. Citizenship*. "No one knows at Mrs. Donahue's or the park," he confessed sadly. "I take the test again Friday and I'm frightened. . . ."

"But your briefcase?"

"Briefcase," he repeated with a puzzled look. Then he indicated a table near the book aisle. The case was open. So with my telescopic acuity, I zoomed in and inventoried the contents: pencils, pen, a note pad, paper clips, and scratch paper. Nothing unusual. Of course, I cautioned myself, he could have already concealed the device—

"Listen, Ramsey," Sjordahl said in a pleading tone, "there's no need to mention this to anyone. . . ."

There was something so compelling in his voice that I found myself readily agreeing with him, shaking my head—

Inside my shell, I jerked upright in my operator's sling as if awakening from a trance, for I realized the devious scoundrel had almost lulled me out of the lotus position. Thank the stars for my super training and ever vigilant manner. He turned to replace one of the books, and I saw my opportunity to chop him behind the right ear. He slumped back into my arms. I turned him over and searched for the seal-seam catch at the base of his throat. . . .

But as with Jefferies, I found absolutely *nothing*.

No catch.

Sjordahl was just as he appeared, an old Danish seaman, studying secretively for his citizenship test.

I helped him to his feet, explaining sheepishly that a text had fallen from the top shelf, striking him on the head. He rubbed his neck and nodded, still too dazed to see through my feeble coverup. We picked up his briefcase, and, after stopping for a drink of water in the main lobby, we returned to Mrs. Donahue's.

LYING ON THE BED IN MY ROOM, I TURNED OFF THE high-performance mode, allowing my power cell the opportunity to recharge, and almost immediately slipped into a deep depression. I tried to sort through a numbing state of confusion; but even my enhanced intellect was adversely affected by the lethargic state. . . . I tried to concentrate. Clearly my investigation had gone awry, neither of my suspects was Jalak. Was it remotely possible that I, the Service's finest undercover agent (master grade), had erred or that my sidekick, Chatterbox, had miscalculated?—

Probability very low on latter.

The sudden printout, an obviously clumsy attempt to lighten my mood, did nothing to lift my depressed state. Still puzzled, I decided to slip from my cumbersome shell—an obvious breach of the Undercover Agent's Code—but I judged that it was perfectly safe to reveal my secret identity and appearance in the privacy of the little room. I found the seal-seam catch at the base of my throat and tripped it, running my finger down the seam, exposing my operation chamber. Slipping from the sling, I scurried out of the shell, feeling relieved of a great burden. I rested

on the pillow of the bed, turning inward, tapping that reservoir of extra spiritual strength possessed by all undercover agents (at least those of master grade). I meditated, finally gaining complete control of my emotional and intellectual facilities. Then I refocused on the problem. Calling on my extensive training in inductive and deductive logic, I realized that I had *not* checked out every possible suspect at Mrs. Donahue's.

No, indeed—

My keen hearing detected a faint sound at the door.

In a blur of motion, I scurried back into my fleshy disguise, quickly zipping up the seal-seam.

My human throat constricted with joy, for I had glimpsed an eye at the keyhole to my door, an eye of unusual color peering in at me, glittering a deep amethyst. At that very moment my third suspect was revealing her true identity—

But the eye disappeared and I heard a thump.

Moving cautiously, I pulled open the door. Mrs. Donahue was in a crumpled heap at my feet, unconscious. Seizing the opportunity, I knelt and searched for the neck catch. . . . with no luck.

There was no seal-seam, no disguise.

APPARENTLY MRS. DONAHUE WAS nothing more than a frail old lady, who had fainted after spying into a room and spotting more than she'd hoped to see. I smoothed back the hair from her head and patted her hand gently, trying to revive her, my thoughts drifting.

Again I'd come up with a false positive.

Where was Jalak? He had to be in this building, that much was certain. But I'd checked every resident. . . . or had I?

I sorted through the morning's events,

the initial meeting with Mrs. Donahue—

Suddenly I remembered the growl and accompanying explanation: *I don't know what's come over him lately.*

Well, I did! *The dog was Jalak!*

Yes, indeed. Probability 100 percent.

Oh, the perverted irony of the cruel villain, disguised as man's best friend. I fairly seethed with anger. Then, inside my fleshy disguise, I chuckled, considering the possibility of calling the local pound and having the arch-fiend locked up with a bunch of stray mutts. The poetic justice of the idea almost begged me to act.

But no, that would not do. It would tip my hand, as they say in the park (an idiom referring to a hand of cards). Obviously Jalak was not aware that I had discovered his true identity as Shadow. . . . He probably wasn't even aware of my presence yet. Perhaps I could use this to good advantage, record for the Service how the scoundrel actually operated, even capture a device, before I moved in for the kill.

Mrs. Donahue moaned, her eyes fluttering.

Insanely I chuckled with glee, for I, the Service's finest undercover agent (master grade) had the criminal genius Jalak just where I wanted him. But I pushed all thoughts of the dog from my mind. For the moment, the most important task was to convince this good woman that she hadn't really observed a bug-like creature scurrying around on her pillowcase.

It would call for an exceptional degree of charm and persuasiveness. . . .

Fortunately, these characteristics were included in the repertoire of all undercover agents, especially refined and developed in those agents of master grade. I smiled down at the good woman, confident that I was the *man* for the job, so to speak.

A DANGEROUS

BY ARLAN ANDREWS
Illustration by Mike Hill



KNOWLEDGE

FOR IT IS A STRANGE STORY, DEAR reader, and the reason I scratch these few lines. May the goddesses preserve this knowledge and pass on to distant generations the lessons of pride.

I, Proximateles, of the Hellenic island Sikinos, returned to this, the tiny island of my birth, five years ago, fresh from my studies with the Brotherhood of Pythagorus, those sainted aristocrats of Italia who possess the most advanced knowledge of our time. Sent to study abroad amongst the rising civilization spreading from the town of Rome, my merchant father entrusted my education to the Pythagoreans, hoping that I might fuse together the mundane considerations of the business world with the philosophies and natural laws understood by Greeks and taught by Romans. By this method he hoped to discover new markets for the dyes and cloth that he bartered from the Phoenicians.

Unfortunately, though my mind soared with the insights and mysteries of the Pythagorean school, I never had the brash personality to become such a merchant, and so my father's investment was barely repaid by my meager and half-hearted efforts to keep his accounts straight. No new markets flowed from my heart, only new ways to interpret natural phenomena. Few drachma found their way into my purse from the lectures I gave to the dozen academics on this island.

And this leads to my short account of the recent matter upon Sikinos. Came a foreign ship, small it was, crewed by one man alone. Of strange and unusual sails, the craft docked at our port and the lone man disembarked. Theomas the Portmaster approached the foreigner and stated the customary fee for ship rental and asked the man his name, cargo, and business.

"Thyminius, late of Taranto, sire," the golden-bearded man answered. "I am the only cargo, and invention is my business." A brawny and well-formed man, he was taller than most Hellenes, with the lighter skin common to the barbarians who had begun to settle the northernmost sections of the Italian peninsula. His Greek was excellent, though a trifle sophisticated for our outlying edge of Hellenistic civilization. He would have fit into, say, Athenian social circles as a peer. Here, the citizens saw him as a superior. I must admit I did not care for him the first time I met him, later that afternoon.

The stranger Thyminius slinked into my midafternoon lecture on the nature of the propulsive forces of the universe, which we call by the new word, "energy." The heat of the noontide was past and the fowl and wine we had shared had created a comfortable bond among the eight of us cronies who had the good fortune not to have to labor in the fields or vineyards for our livelihood. That day it was my turn to elaborate on the peripheries of the Pythagorean Mysteries. My secret dream was to establish a school of advanced thought here on the outpost of the world

*When Thyminius
staked his life on a
promise of free and
plentiful energy,
plucked from the air—
little did the inventor
know it could cost him
just that!*

and thereby gain students and followers from abroad. I had the continuing guilt that my father regretted his waste of money on a foolish education, and I wanted to earn a separate income from students who would come hear me as I had gone to Italia.

Sitting in the dark shade of a ledge in the small courtyard, Thyminius' face was hidden from my view, but I felt an instant threatening presence as he quietly walked in and sat, uninvited. I ignored his rude act quite intentionally and continued my discourse. Facing me, none of the others had taken notice of the newcomer.

"Sainted Pythagoras and his Brotherhood revealed the knowledge that the Sun is the central fire around which rotate the spherical earth and the other planets," I said. This idea was nothing new to my friends but would have been quite shocking to any outside ignoramus who still believed Zeus on Mount Olympus cranked up the stars in their courses. I couldn't see my antagonist's face but saw him shaking his head side-to-side in agreement with my pronouncement. "The Moon rotates around the spherical earth, always keeping one face to our mother planet." Still no disagreement, no apparent shock from the stranger. I felt that I was dealing either with an educated outsider or a complete fool. My eager audience just stared as if waiting for my point.

"The Brothers in Italia are now pondering the significance of the kinds of 'energy' that impel the planets to orbit the Sun." Cloaked in deepening shadow, my opponent said nothing. After a while I began to speculate wildly, trying to entice the intruder to speak, to disagree with me. No matter what heresy I spoke, he sat immobile or just shook his head in assent. Finally I could withstand my curiosity no more and addressed him directly.

"Eia, there," I pointed, watching the surprise on the faces of my other listeners. "Who are you and what brings you to this small gathering of truth-seekers?"

He strolled into the sunlight nodding his head and spreading his tanned muscular arms in courteous greetings to those assembled. "Thyminius, hark from Italia, Taranto. I be an inventor, a loving user of the kinds of knowledge you honored scholars"—here he bowed gracefully to me and the whole group assembled—"have uncovered." His broad face in the magnificent setting of his light beard and his rough but carefully-fitted breeches provided a contrast to our small frames and white robes. Feeling the confusion of my friends, I invited him to speak to us. That was my first mistake, dear reader, and also his.

"I have sailed alone from Taranto in Italia," he began, his perfect ardent and pleasant appearance winning us over in spite of his barbarian origins. "to practice the art of *inventing*. I wish to gain knowledge from such as yourselves and then utilize that knowledge for the betterment of the populace." He smiled, revealing perfect teeth in that perfect mouth in that perfect face. "And

for the betterment of myself, of course," and he patted the purse at his waist, adding its jingle as evidence of past successes.

"I have chosen your island because I want to try an 'experiment' to utilize a new kind of 'energy' that you, sir," he said to me, "were just explaining." He told us that 'experiment' was his word for attempting to accomplish a proposed task, but in an orderly manner. Immediately we academics were suspicious. Such work was fit only for craftsmen, artisans. We argued with him on the matter. Surely he understood that the low-born inherited the artisan instinct from their forebears and had thereby produced the artifices of the great civilizations of the known world? Surely he did not propose that such have the certainty of their various crafts and trades stricken from them. Did he not realize the social turmoil that must surely follow? Did he not recognize the superior classes had not the skills, the mental talents to keep the great wheels of agriculture, architecture, and merchanting in operation?

SMILING ONCE MORE, THE STRANGER RETURNED TO HIS ORIGINAL seat and brought forth a skin bag containing, I supposed, the tools of his own trade, though I had never before encountered an "inventor." Everyone wondered what sort of apparatus he must use in his unusual occupation. We Pythagoreans knew, of course, that "magic" could not exist, that advanced knowledge appears to be magic only to the ignorant. Nevertheless, we were nervous about the novel ideas this outsider had thrown in our midst. I for one was deeply suspicious.

Standing once more behind the podium, the foreigner Thyminius plucked from his bag a strange conglomeration of toothed wheels. Gears! We all recognized gears, this was nothing new. The Italian Pythagoreans used gears and boiling water engines to open and shut large doors, and I had more than once addressed my fellow Sikinians on the philosophies evident in such demonstrations. But *that* was ancient knowledge! This—was crude and common. Thyminius did not know of our group's extensive history of debating such mechanical wonders, nor of our disregard for the vulgar products of the artisan's huts. He continued on in ignorance.

"This device I have constructed from the wonderful teachings of Pythagoras. Knowing the true meaning of the wandering stars, the *planetes*, I was able to build this artifact." Smiling, he turned a small crank and the several gears began to rotate in varying degrees according to the planet they represented. "I can use it to predict the configuration of the heavens, or to go backward and determine past configurations!" I was outraged! If I had wasted my father's gold and silver on the Pythagorean studies, at the very least I had learned that the ancient fraud of astrology was just that! I jumped to my feet. "Astrology? Fraud! Thyminius, why such effort, why such artisan arrogance merely to construct a . . . device, . . . for a fraudulent 'science' such as astrology?" I sneered. "Do you claim to be a magician? Be warned! We burn magicians in this high civilization!"

The bearded giant was taken aback. "I mean no such disrespect for your customs or your civilization, honored sir," he proclaimed in exactly the meekness required. "I use this not for astrology, but for navigation. With this small gearbox, tied to an accurate hourglass, one sailor can travel around the entire sphere of the mother *planetes* Earth!" He was beaming, radiant. At that moment I felt that he was perfect, and I loved and hated him at once.

For the rest of the afternoon and on into the darkness of the night, all of us sat, enraptured by the stories this man spun. Of a trip to the Pillars of Hercules. Of visits to the legendary sites of the exploits of the infamous Ulysses. Of the true meaning behind the story of the brass giant *Talos* and who its creator, Hephaestus, actually was. After everyone else had left for the evening and I was awash with the afterglow of wine, I invited him to my house. He was a marvelous lover, amenable alike to the servant girl and myself, and wonder of wonders, 'experimented' with joyous combinations of all three of us.

Awake at first dawn, I slipped from my bed and at a small secluded temple made my morning supplication to the memory of Pythagoras and partook of the sacred mixture prepared with my mortar and pestle, as prescribed by the highest level of the inner circle of the Italian school.

When I returned from my hilltop reverie, I found Thyminius and my father in raucous laughter, my father pounding him on the back. "Har, har! My dear Thyminius! With this I'll be able to send my own merchants in search of the Phoenicians' secret sources of copper and dyes!" On the wine table was the gearbox. I watched from a window as my father generously filled the barbarian's purse with gold. I stammered with jealous resentment, not knowing, not caring, whether it was for my father or for the foreigner who had transported me to ecstasy and who had aroused in me the first desire for a *woman* that I had ever felt. I went to my room and rang the kitchen for strong wine.

In the next days, I witnessed or heard tales of our new friend seducing half the male and female(?) population of Sikinios while he plied his trade of bartering new devices for gold. He traded an Archimedeian screw, used to transport water up from a sluice to a field, for one bag of silver. He attached iron plates to the bottom of the hooves of draft animals for a city merchant, increasing the useful life of the animals by protecting their feet from the myriads of rocks on the trails between cities. Every day his host sat higher in the water, yet he had brought only unbent metals into the port and there was no duty on such materials. The Portmaster began thinking on such matters as he saw the barbarian increase his wealth without sharing a single drachma with the poor officials of the port.

THE FINAL EPISODE OF MY BRIEF TALE, DEAR READER, began when the purse of Thyminius was overflowing and his popularity exceeded even that. We academics met in secret session, expressing fears that the stranger was using sorcery or, as we called it, "dangerous knowledge," to extract wealth and respect from the population of our small, backward island. Certainly such tactics never would have taken root in dearest Athens or even in far off, robust and bawdy Rome. Of secondary importance was the fact that we academics were fast losing our influence among our neighbors and that we might have to employ ourselves in mundane labors, prostituting ourselves, so to speak, in order to enjoy our long afternoons in feasting, wine, and debate.

I led the resisting faction in the afternoons (we hadn't seen Thyminius since he started his quest to sell his 'inventions' to every person on Sikinios who had a gold or silver piece to part with). I mostly resented the fact that he did not share my bed often, and that I had to resort to the maids for my animal releases. My former friends in the afternoon *agora* no longer appealed to me, not even as much as any of the merest female of my father's ample household staff. I knew intellectually that I should not neglect my loving male friends, but after Thyminius I had no such desires. Save for him.

Thyminius came to our afternoon lecture that one fateful day and asked permission to address us. "Revered academics of Sikinios," he began, much more seriously than we had ever seen him in these past few weeks since his arrival. "I have now accumulated enough wealth to begin the experiment for which I came to your beautiful island these many weeks ago." Bapt we sat and listened as he spun his tale of fantastic devices that would bring about more wealth than any of us had ever known. He spoke of unknown sources of 'energy,' available all around us, but seldom used by anyone for useful work. We Pythagoreans-to-be glared darkly at him as he stood behind the podium and spewed heresy to our educated minds.

"I will build such a machine and demonstrate it for all to see," he said. His beautiful blue eyes were alive with fire for his incredible scheme. "Sikinios will be the center of world 'technology' and

the academic society here will be renowned even unto the gods!" He raised his arms toward the skies and closed his eyes in ecstasy. We academics regarded the whole scene as heresy and an insult; we would not be party to such fraud.

"I tell you, my friends," and he winked at me with one eye, for what purpose I cannot say, being purposefully ignorant of barbarian customs, "I will build this machine and it will work forever for you, with no energy input, save the natural forces I have already described."

I could not tolerate such a statement and jumped to my feet. "Thyminius, 'inventor,' you swear that you will build such a 'machine' as you call it, and that once it operates, no further energy will be required?"

He bowed to us all from the podium. "I do, Proximateles, and I swear thus upon my very life." Sad, dear reader, that he swore thus, for oaths in Hellenic are sacred, though I now knew that barbarians make such oaths lightly, sometimes even in jest!

And so it was agreed amongst the academic group that Thyminius would be assisted in the construction of his 'free-energy device,' financed from the fat purse he had gotten from the citizens of Sikinos. Craftsmen were let loose from the labors of their lords—building walls, roofs, boats, nets, and the like—to complete the designs of the Italian. We academics whispered to all on the island the condition that Thyminius himself had agreed to, and a few of us prepared for the eventual outcome.

CAME THE FATEFUL DAY OF THE 'DEMONSTRATION' AND ALL players in this tragedy were gathered together, hundreds of Hellenes in the largest assemblage ever seen in our small island's unimpressive history. In the early morning sunlight, Thyminius stood in front of his huge structure. It was the strangest thing ever seen, exceeding even the inventions of Hephaestus Himself: long, broad 'energy catchers,' Thyminius called them. A central supporting structure containing mysterious 'energy converters,' he said. He had never told us exactly how the device was supposed to 'transform energy,' as he put it. "If I told you how simple it is, why you'd do it yourself and steal the knowledge from me. I need to obtain gold from this 'invention' so that I might travel the remainder of this spherical planet and seek out new knowledge and make new 'inventions!'"

I was more skeptical than most, for one of the deepest Mysteries of Pythagoras was this: What comes out, must go in! There is no Magic, no Supernatural Power. This is the Ultimate Law by which to judge natural philosophy and unnatural claims.

To this day I recall the croaky whispers of the Most Ancient in that underground pool where the Final Sacrament of Pythagoras was performed. "By this shall ye judge all men, their honesty, their intent: 'Nothing is created from Nothing, nor can anything in Creation be destroyed. To all who oppose this one true statement of the Universe, Nature and the gods must bring Death!'"

As Thyminius regaled the assembled throng that morning, I watched fellow academics prepare the faggots and the pole and knew what must happen next. As the only true Pythagorean on the island, I was the only one who could do what would have to be done. Face uplifted, I watched as Thyminius cut certain ropes and cords and ordered his 'machine' into action. As I had feared, nothing happened. "Fellows," he bellowed, "This little problem will soon be solved, I assure you. The natural conditions are not right. Just wait and my machine will perform as promised."

Ugly murmurs swelled among the crowd. Had not this 'machine' been built with the honest sweat of artisans who should have been doing the work of their lords? (No mention was made that the lords had been well recompensed for the services of their men.) Had not the fellow come from far-off Italia empty-pursed and now mispent the wealth of the citizens of Hellenic? (No mention was made of the improvements to the commerce that the merchants welcomed, nor that most all of the gold and silver remained on our island, in one pocket or another.) And only whis-

pered amongst the academics—myself included, I am ashamed to say—*Did not this foreigner, this barbarian, delude us all with his tales of prostituting pure knowledge for vulgar show?*

Thyminius' demeanor did not assist his cause that morning. Totally ignorant of the undercurrents of social and emotional tension, he harangued his 'machine' and the gods, blaming natural phenomena for not cooperating in his weird enterprise. In a final fatal error, he walked down from the platform from which he had tried to initiate his 'free-energy device.'

"Where are you going, barbarian?" yelled a nearly-bankrupt merchant who had refused Thyminius' assistance.

"Back to my boat for some tools, you old fool," he bellowed back. "And to pray for better conditions."

At that insult, the educated citizens of Sikinos—we academics—took up the shout: "Fraud! Swindler! Thief!" Frightened by the rusty nature of the crowd, those few whom Thyminius had greatly enriched, my own father and his boatmen among them, were afraid to resist.

I am ashamed to say that the emotion of the mob seized even me as we attacked the blond giant and attached him to the already-prepared pole in the midst of the dry faggots. He was astonished. "Wait, Sikinosians," he laughed. "Later today, my machine will work and you'll be prosperous. I chose your island because I studied the natural energies that circulate around it."

He smiled as though we were joking. I was pushed forward to pronounce the impromptu judgment on this fraud, this beautiful, magnificent, loving... fraud! "Thyminius of Taranto, we are not ignorant fools on this island, who believe that we can achieve something for nothing." I saw sober headshakes among the front rows of citizens. They were agreeing with me, good! I continued, "You have come to this small outpost of civilization and preyed upon the good nature of our citizens and forced us all into the debacle of your great 'free-energy machine.'" I waved toward the tall structure, fixed in its configuration as I had always known it would stay: not moving, not working. "Something for nothing, you promised us." I lifted my hands and flaming torches were held high by my former friends, my former lovers. Thyminius at that moment finally understood the seriousness of his plight.

"For all the gods' sakes, Proximateles, it *will* work! Give me just a few hours, just a...!" He was too late. I dropped both my arms and the torches lit the fire.

HE SCREAMED, OH GODS, HE SCREAMED. TO THIS DAY, I can still hear those screams. He cursed me and my sacred school and all the gods on high and under the earth. He screamed. I stood Spartan-like, watching as the flesh melted from his bare feet and the flames licked his thighs and he screamed! He jerked his head from side to side as his beautiful blond beard ignited, searing that magnificent face. I watched impassively as his once-beautiful body realized its plight and lost consciousness and jerked no more, his dying screams only a distant echo down the narrow dirty alleyways of our city. His flesh smelt like burnt pig.

In 10 minutes he was a blackened parody of a man, bodily fluids giving rise to greasy smoke as the winds picked up to give his pyre a fresh burst of energy. As the flames blossomed once more, rekindled by his liquids, they began to peel away the remaining humanness from the sad, thin candle that once had been my lover Thyminius. The sight seared my soul; many others were similarly shamed, both then and soon afterward.

Suddenly the hushed crowd of onlookers, myself included, raised our heads at a new noise, a *creaking* that came from overhead. We gaped at first in growing horror, then in awe. For, as the wind increased in force, in part fed from the rising hot air of Thyminius' pyre, the "free energy device" was beginning to react to the influx of air. It moved!

Thyminius' device was working—it *works to this very day!*—exactly as he had predicted: The machine he called "windmill." □

Somewhere over the rainbow, a young girl's diary tells what might have been. . . .

ANNE

BY PAUL DI FILIPPO

Illustration by Doug Chezem

The night train from Frankfurt was late. Nothing went nowadays as it should. The simple businessman awaiting the arrival of the German coaches at Amsterdam's central station began to grow nervous. The telegram in his pocket said that his two brothers-in-law had managed to board the express. But suppose something had happened to them . . . The worst of the pogroms in their native city had ended, and they had emerged unscathed. But the turbid current of anti-Semitism still ran strong, throughout all Europe. What if there had been a last-minute inspection, a questioning of documents or motives at the border? The man could picture his in-laws all too plainly in the hands of the Gestapo.

A chill December wind blew in off the Het IJ, the Amsterdam Harbor. To the man standing on the exposed platform, it smelled like the breath of a wolf.

Nothing could be counted on in this bad year of 1938.

The man's anxiety increased. His chest felt filled with sand. This simple delay—undoubtedly innocent—was somehow driving home to him with more force than many a greater outrage, the tremendous uncertainty of the times, the danger under which they all lived.

What a responsibility, to care for a family, a wife and two daughters, under such conditions!

He had thought they were safe in Holland. For five years they had lived here in relative security. He had been able to convince himself that the madness in Germany would not touch them in their adopted country. But now he knew differently. Not one inch of the continent would be spared the insanity of Hitler and his followers.

Suddenly he was possessed by a flash of prescience, a moment of revelation of Old Testament proportions.

If they stayed here, they would all die. Sooner or later, despite all possible delaying tactics, all the tricks and dodges of the pursued, the Nazis would get them. They were doomed.

Under the impact of the vision, the man began to weep.

The arrival of the Frankfurt train brought him back to himself. He dried his tears on his coat sleeve and searched the faces of the disembarking passengers for his wife's brothers.

There they were!

"Hans, Dietrich, how good to see you again!"

"And you, Otto."

They embraced, then stepped apart.



Otto said, "It's a walk of a mile or two home. Do you mind? It would save trolley fare. . . ."

"Not at all," said Hans, "It will feel good to stretch our legs after the long journey."

"And it will give us time to talk," added Dietrich. "Man to man, without troubling Edith or the girls."

"I understand."

They departed the station and soon picked up the Oz Voorburgwal south.

"We live in the River Quarter, South Amsterdam," explained Otto. "Many Jewish families have gathered there."

For some minutes the brothers brought Otto up-to-date on the affairs of those relatives and friends who remained in Frankfurt. The news was welcome, but at the same time disturbing. Things were worse than he had guessed.

At last, within sight of the Town Hall, Hans broached the real meat of their discussion.

"We are not settling here, Otto, despite your kind offer. We are determined to move on. In fact, we have already purchased passage to America."



Otto was stunned. "America . . . Why so far? We'll never see you again. And what will you do there?"

Dietrich answered, "To my mind, it's just far enough. Let us not fool ourselves, Otto. The Nazis will not stop until they've conquered all of Europe. It's as plain as the yellow star they force all Jews to wear! Even England is not safe. As to how we shall manage—well, we are skilled German optical craftsmen. Surely such talents are in demand everywhere."

They crossed the Amstel River. Ice floes resembling partially surfaced U-boats passed beneath the many bridges. Otto did not speak. He could not bring himself to contradict what the brothers had said, not after his revelation.

As they crossed Prinsengracht, Dietrich said, "Will you and Edith and the children join us, Otto? There are some steerage berths left on our ship. It's not too late. . . ."

Despite his recent vision of their doom, Otto could not bring himself to instantly agree. His nature was more timid than that of the two bachelors.

"I don't know. . . . It means starting from scratch. Life would

be hard at first. I'm not sure that Edith would like America . . . And I have an obligation to my current firm—" Hans suddenly stopped and grabbed Otto by the upper arms.

"*Mein Gott!* Otto, wake up! This is your last chance!"

Otto's voice quavered. "I just don't know what's necessary. It's all too confusing—"

Dietrich intervened. "Hans, please. Otto will make up his own mind. All we can do is offer our advice." He looked keenly at Otto. "And let me reiterate, we strongly recommend flight. If not for all of you, at least the children."

This possibility had never occurred to Otto. "Split up the family? I couldn't—"

"Think on it. We could present it to the girls as a little vacation with their two rediscovered uncles. Not upsetting in the least. Come, man! If you and Edith won't save yourselves, you must at least save the children."

They were silent the rest of the way home.

No. 46 Merwedeplein was brightly lit. When the door was opened a gust of warm air, scented with heavenly odors of cooking, washed over the three men.

Edith stepped forth from the kitchen, drying her hands on her apron. Upon sighting her brothers, she began to cry. They hastened to hug and comfort her, while Otto stood uselessly by.

Attracted by the noises, an adolescent girl wearing glasses emerged from the parlor. She was followed closely by her sister, some three years younger.

Otto reintroduced the girls to the uncles they had not seen in many years.

"This is Margot," he said, indicating the elder. "Margot, give your uncles a kiss."

Margot did so.

"And this is Anneliese Marie."

The younger girl had dark hair and gray-green eyes with green flecks. Dimples were prominent in her cheeks and chin. She had a slight overbite.

Now her interesting eyes flashed. "Pim," she said forthrightly and with great dignity, using her father's nickname, "you know I prefer to be called Anne."

Her uncles laughed at her seriousness. "Very well," said Hans. "Little Miss Anne Frank it shall be!"

Thursday, June 14, 1939

On Tuesday, June 12th, I woke up at six o'clock, and no wonder; it was my first screen test.

Oh, yes, it was my 10th birthday also. At the breakfast table, I was treated to a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" from Uncle Hans, Uncle Dietrich and Margot. Silly old Hans had stuck a candle in my Cream of Wheat, and I had to blow it out. Then I received my presents. From the uncles, a subscription to *Screen Romances*, along with some new publicity stills for my collection, and from Margot, this diary I am now writing in. It has a marvelous picture of Rin-Tin-Tin on the cover. A trifle babyish, perhaps, for a young lady of my years, but I like it nonetheless.

But the celebration could not take my mind off the upcoming test. I confess I was a little nervous, and kept fussing with my hair at the mirror for so long that Uncle Dietrich had to call out, "Hurry up, liebkchen, or we'll be late!"

Riding to the studio in our big Packard, I sat between the uncles up front, a rare treat. Normally Margot and I are consigned to the back. Uncle Hans, driving, said, "Are you sure you want to go through with this, Anne? After all, you're still quite young to be thinking of a career."

"Only a year younger than Shirley Temple," I replied. "And she has been making films for ages. And after all, it's been my only dream for years and years now."

"Very well," he said. "But don't set your hopes too high. There are dozens of pretty young girls for every role. I see them arrive at the studio every day, and most go away heartbroken."

"Not me, Uncle. I am grateful just for this chance to audition. If I fail, I will go back happily to my studies. Why, there's lots of other careers I could have. Perhaps I could be a journalist, for instance."

"I am glad to find you so sensible, Anne. I had to call in many favors to get you this opportunity, but it is still far from a sure thing."

Soon we were through the studio gates. The lot was hustling with glamorous people, and I thought to myself, Little Anne, you have certainly come a long way from that Montessori schoolyard halfway around the world!

Almost before I knew it, we were on the sound stage. The lights, the microphones, the cameras and the spectators, although just as I had always imagined them, were enough to make my head spin. With cameras whirring, I was asked to recite one of Temple's speeches from *Captain January*, which I managed to do without flubbing it. A voice from beyond the lights next asked me to "sing something." I obliged with Captain Spalding's big number from *Animal Crackers*. And then it was over, almost before it had begun.

Uncle Dietrich had gone to work already, but Uncle Hans was waiting for me.

"Do you know who that was who asked you to sing?"

"No. Who?"

Uncle's voice assumed a reverent tone. "That was Louis Mayer himself!"

Accompanying Uncle to the workshop, where I would spend the day (what bliss!), I actually saw in the flesh the beautiful Lane Sisters, Lola, Rosemary and Priscilla, the stars of *Four Daughters*. Lola and Rosemary were busy chatting gaily with some men, but Priscilla—my favorite—was kind enough to bestow a warm smile on me.

To think that once, back in Amsterdam, I had a fantasy of Priscilla Lane becoming my special friend—And now it might actually come true!

Saturday, June 16, 1939

I haven't written for a few days, because I wanted first of all to think about my diary. I don't want to set down a series of bald facts in a diary like most people do, but I want this diary itself to be my friend, and I shall call my friend Priscilla (after whom, we all know!).

I shall start by sketching out my life since Margot and I arrived in America, under the guardianship of our uncles.

We landed, of course, in New York. Soon, we were living with Jewish friends on the Lower East Side. Unfortunately, work was hard to find, even for such talented craftsmen as Hans and Dietrich. One day, a month or so after our arrival, Margot and I were told that we were moving.

"Before our savings are eaten away, we intend to try our hand at life in California, girls. They say Hollywood needs lots of camera technicians and repairmen."

"Hollywood!" I shouted. "Hurrah! Oh, thank you, thank you, dear uncles!"

"Oh, Anne," said Margot, somewhat snippily, "please spare us. Don't make it sound as if our uncles are catering to your foolish obsession. It's strictly a practical move."

I knew this, but I could still maintain my fantasy, couldn't I? You see, diary, ever since I was in kindergarten, I had been enthralled by the cinema. The walls of my room back in Amsterdam were positively covered with photos of my favorite stars. I could recite the plots of all the films I had ever seen, as well as the names of many of the actors and crew involved. In short, I was a regular little star-struck fan.

Well, we packed our meager belongings and set out on the westward train journey, rather like the hardy souls in John Ford's *Stagecoach*. I was much taken with the vastness of my new home, its immense and varied terrain. I found the farms most impressive; one could never go hungry in this land!

Upon arrival, just as we had hoped, Hans and Dietrich quickly found jobs. And not just with one of the "Poverty Row" studios either, but with the biggest: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

MGM has 20 directors, 75 writers and 250 actors and actresses on permanent payroll! Last year, its profits were over five million dollars. It's just tops!

And, diary—your friend, Anne, was just singing to its head, Louis R. Mayer!

Monday, June 18, 1939

Dear Priscilla,

I hardly know where to begin.

Honestly, living in America ages one entirely beyond one's years! (And although most people would not credit it, pleasant experiences can sometimes be as trying as unpleasant ones. . . .)

I know I've always been a precocious child. (Haven't Pim and Mums forever delighted in scolding me for it?) But since coming to Hollywood, I feel as if I've gone from childhood to young womanhood overnight. Even though I have just turned 10, I feel at least a good five years older. (Although my figure surely lags behind!)

But I'm circling around the important issue I have to relate. It seems that I am afraid to set it down on paper, lest it prove the merest soap bubble of my overactive imagination.

Today, Mr. Mayer offered me a role!

And not just any old role, but the starring role in a new family film. (Mr. Mayer always says he will never put his name on a picture he's ashamed to let his family see.)

It happened like this.

At eight this morning, the phone rang. When Uncle Hans hung up, he wore a stunned expression.

"That was Mayer's secretary, Anne. He wants to see you in his office at ten."

I walked around the house in a daze. The drive to the studio passed unnoticed by me. The next thing I knew, I was sitting in Mr. Mayer's office in front of his huge desk, Uncle Hans by my side.

"So, Miss Frank—your uncle tells me you'd like to become an actress."

"Yes, sir. I've been told I have a talent for mimicry. I could always imitate my friends back home. Strangers too."

"Your test shows promise, real promise. Normally, we'd start you out small, a bit part here and there. But it just so happens that something's come up where your inexperience might actually be valuable. Have you ever read *The Wizard of Oz*?"

"Mr. Frank Baum's book? Of course."

"Well, we're filming it. Or at least, we're trying to. I don't know what's the matter with this project, but at times it seems cursed. I wanted to begin it last year, but couldn't free up Vic—Vic Fleming—from *Gone With the Wind*. My son-in-law, Selznick, had a lock on him. Then as soon as he was ready, just a month ago, we lost Judy."

An expression of genuine grief passed over Mr. Mayer's face. I knew that Judy Garland had been one of his personal favorites.

"It was a horrible accident," I said, though I fear my words were little consolation. "I cried when I read about it in *Photoplay*."

Mr. Mayer looked approvingly at me. "I appreciate that, Anne. Not only was it wrenching for me, but also for the studio. Judy's death in that car crash threw a monkey wrench into the filming. We had already shot several key scenes with her too. Then, on top of that, just last week Buddy Ebsen developed an allergy to his Tin Man makeup. It was almost enough to make me abandon the whole project. But then you showed up, as if by a miracle."

Mr. Mayer got up and came around to sit on his desk. "Anne, I think you'd be perfect for the part of Dorothy. The more I thought about it, the more I realized Judy was a bit too old at seventeen for the character. Baum had a younger, more innocent kid in mind, someone kinda naive, and I think it's you. Are you interested?"

I could hardly breathe. Yet somehow I managed to reply.

"Interested? Mr. Mayer, I'd die for such a part!"

Mr. Mayer slapped his hands on his knees. "Great! It's settled then. Now, all I've got to do is line up someone to replace Ebsen."

Uncle Hans and I got up to go, but a word from Mr. Mayer stopped us.

"Oh, one more thing, kid. That last name. It's got to go. Too Jewish. German too. Your accent's almost unnoticeable, and lessons'll clean up the rest, but the name's a dead giveaway. Now don't get me wrong. I'm a Yid myself, there's no prejudice involved, it's just that the public likes its stars non-denominational, if you get my drift."

I admit I was taken somewhat aback, never having thought of my heritage as anything to be ashamed of. But I recovered quickly.

"Perhaps I could use my uncle's name?"

"Hollander? Kinda long. Say, what if we shorten it? How does 'Anne Holland' grah you?"

I considered it for only a brief moment before agreeing. "Sounds swell."

Mr. Mayer smiled, and came to shake my hand. "Kid, I can see we're going to get along fine."

Tuesday, June 26, 1939

Dear Priscilla,

My first day of filming was a huge success, but more worrying than I ever could have imagined. I got off on a good footing with my co-stars, disarming what I suspected was some initial jealousy that a newcomer like myself should suddenly leap into such a prominent role. By the end of the day we were all clowning together between takes like old chums.

I have been assigned a chaperone and tutor to accompany me on the set. (How I wish Mums could have taken this role; perhaps it would have brought us closer together. . . .) Her name is Toby Wing, and I'm afraid that, try as I will, I can only consider her a rather harsh and vulgar person. She had a few small parts several years ago, mostly for Paramount, but hasn't really worked since 1934's *Search for Beauty*. Somehow—I hate to imagine the circumstances—she ended up on the MGM payroll. She's quite glamorous, in a showgirlish way, with platinum hair and long legs (which she doesn't hesitate to show off at the slightest provocation!), but she snaps her chewing gum and has horrible diction.

When I contrast her with you, Priscilla, my dream friend, how coarse she appears! Fancy this: attempting to give me a math lesson during lunch, she said, "Your figure comes first, honey, but it don't hurt to know figures too. Else how you gonna count your diamonds?"

Diamonds? As if that's why I'm doing this!

Oh, well, best to keep all this between you and me, diary, as I do with everything.

Sunday, September 2, 1939

Dear Priscilla,

Please forgive me. Filming has kept me so busy that I haven't written to you in all these days. But yesterday's events compelled me to.

Hitler has invaded Poland. No more need be said. The war that everyone dreaded for so long is underway.

Oh, what will become of my dear Pim and Mumsie, not to mention all my other friends? Peter, Miep, Eli, Lies, Jopie, Sanne—For now, they are safe. But I have an awful intuition that they will soon be in harm's way.

All Margot and I can do here is pray. I can't imagine what life must be like in Europe now. My days in Amsterdam seem so far away. I guess I am truly an American.

Thursday, April 30, 1940

Dear Priscilla,

Ten months of filming. Who could ever have predicted it would take so long? I feel as if I've passed through a kind of fire that has burned away all I was before. Out of the ashes I emerge a new person, stronger and more mature, one who has earned the right to utter those magic words:

"It's a wrap."

My first film is in the can. It turned out to be the studio's most expensive project to date. In fact, months of post-production work still await, some of which involves me. But for most of my time, I'll be working on a new film. Mr. Mayer already has another project lined up for me. He wants me to play the daughter in an adaptation of the classic *Swiss Family Robinson*. I've just read the book, and it's a thrilling tale. Hard to credit though, a family isolated and trapped like that, living off their wits, surrounded by wild beasts, struggling just to get enough to eat. But Mr. Mayer thinks it will go over big with the public, and I trust his judgment.

I guess it's as Toby said: "Sweetie, you're on your way to the top now!"

Friday, May 10, 1940

Dear Priscilla,

Holland, dear Holland, my namesake, has been invaded! The uncles, Margot and I were glued to the radio all day (Luckily, there was no shooting scheduled.) I can't begin to picture what the innocent country is undergoing. Our hearts go out to the poor helpless citizens there. If only America would get involved in the war—Perhaps there is something I could do as an actress to help. I shall ask Mr. Mayer for his advice.

Wednesday, June 12, 1940

Dear Priscilla,

What should I receive for my birthday from Mr. Mayer but the most fabulous present imaginable!

Fox Studios has had a project on hold for some time, while they gauged public sentiment toward the war, and Mr. Mayer has bought it for me. I'll dive into it as soon as the Swiss pic is finished.

I am to play the daughter of the female lead in *I Married a Nazi*. I've read the script, and it's a corker! In the end, I get to denounce my "father" as a spy, and save Hoover Dam from blowing up.

Now I don't feel quite so useless and powerless.

Friday, September 15, 1940

Dear Priscilla,

Tonight was the best night of my life.

I attended the premiere of *The Wizard of Oz* at Grauman's Chinese Theater.

Stepping from the limousine, adjusting my mink (a beautiful stole by Adrian) around my shoulders as the flashbulbs popped, I could hardly believe that I was soon to see my name, Anne Holland, on the silver screen. I moved as if in a dream. Throughout the whole screening, I felt transported. I was proud of my work, glad that my name was associated with such a fine picture, one that will, I am sure, last for generations and serve as an inspiration of how courage, brains and heart may triumph over adversity. (Is it too much to see in the Wicked Witch a symbol of Nazi tyranny?)

And, dear Pris, just to show you that I am still, under my new exterior, the same little fan I once was, I must exclaim that the premiere was simply studded with stars! (Although much to my disappointment you were not there, since you were busy filming *Four Mothers*, the sequel to *Four Daughters* and *Four Wives*.) It was keen to meet so many of the people I've admired all these years. I even got to shake hands with Charlie McCarthy and his "partner," Edgar Bergen.

As the musicians say, "They're a gas!"

Sunday, December 2, 1940

Dear Priscilla,

The queerest thing happened to me yesterday, and I feel I must tell you about it.

Having developed a headache on the set, I called a halt to filming and asked for a few minutes to recover myself by lying down. Opening my dressing room door, I was shocked to encounter my chaperone, Toby, in an amorous embrace with one of the stagehands. Her dress was hiked halfway to the sky, and her lipstick was all smeared. She looked a fright.

Instead of expressing repentance, she just laughed and said, "Oh, honey, you don't mind, do you? A girl's gotta amuse herself somehow. I wasn't cut out to be no teacher."

I made no reply, and was soon alone in the room, a cold compress on my forehead.

I couldn't get the image of Toby, pressed down by the grip, out of my mind. A mixture of repulsion and attraction filled my bosom.

I have had these kinds of feelings subconsciously before I came here, because I remember that once when I slept with a girlfriend (Bonita Granville), I had a strong desire to kiss her, and I did so.

And in fact, I go into ecstasies every time I see the near-naked figure of a woman, such as Jean Harlow, for example. It strikes me as so wonderful and exquisite that I have difficulty in stopping the tears rolling down my cheeks.

Am I too young for such feelings? Sometimes I feel as if my whole life that was to be has been accelerated beyond all comprehension by forces beyond my control.

If only I had a boyfriend too!

Thursday, June 12, 1941

Dear Priscilla,

Yet another marvelous present from Uncle Louis! (This is becoming a regular tradition....)

He plans to revive the *Andy Hardy* series of films, which has been in abeyance since Judy Garland's death.

And I am to play in them, opposite Mickey Rooney!

Uncle Louis says that, at 12, I am now mature enough to serve as a "love interest" for Mickey, who is seven years my senior, but looks much younger (Just a couple of years ago, in *Boy's Town*, for instance, he was still playing a child's part.)

I can't tell you how excited I am to be working with Mickey. He's so cute!

Don't be jealous of me, Pris!

Monday, July 1, 1941

Dear Priscilla,

At the oddest moments, the plight of my poor parents will recur to me, shattering my mood of the moment and making me forget my lines. Sometimes I feel incredibly guilty that I should have left them behind, to suffer in my stead. At other times, I imagine that my safety and that of Margot must serve as an inspiration to them in their unimaginable difficulties, for I know that they truly do love us both, despite whatever unavoidable fallings-out we might have had.

Would I have accomplished as much with my life had I stayed in Amsterdam? That is a question I will never have the answer to, although just before dropping off to sleep, I sometimes catch a ghostly glimpse of what might have been, and that unreal alternate life both scares and thrills me.

Monday, July 8, 1941

Dear Priscilla,

I've read the script for *Love Finds Andy Hardy*, and must say that several times I blushed. Not that there's anything indecent in it—far from it! It's just that it will be a supreme test of my professionalism to keep my true emotions separate from the role.

You see, I've fallen in love with Mickey!

It's true, Pris. One meeting was all it took. That's what an adorable little charmer he is! (Not that he flirted with me at all. He's the perfect gentleman, and probably feels nothing for me....) But that night, all I did was dream of him.

I was completely upset by the dreams. When Uncle Hans kissed me this morning, I could have cried out: "Oh, if only you were Mickey!" I think of him now all the time, and I keep repeating to myself the whole day: "Oh, Mickey, darling, darling Mickey...."

Who can help me now? I must live on and pray to God that when Mickey someday reads the love in my eyes he will say, "Oh, Anne, if I had only known, I would have come to you long before!"

Sunday, December 7, 1941

Dear Priscilla,

Well, we are in the war now for sure. The destruction at Pearl Harbor has finally awakened the slumbering giant, America. Already Hollywood is shifting gears to do its bit. Who knows? Perhaps one day soon, I will be reunited with Pim and Mumsie. I will buy them a big house in the hills, with lots and lots of rooms, even a secret annex where we can hide together from my public!

Thursday, February 14, 1942

Dear Priscilla,

A valentine from Mickey? Is he just being considerate, or can it be that—?

Toby advises, "Don't throw yourself at him like you're desperate, kid. Keep him guessing and hanging on a little longer."

It seems like a cruel and sneaky tactic, but perhaps I should heed Toby's greater experience.

Monday, March 3, 1942

Dear Priscilla,

Whether it was Toby's advice or my own pure heart, I don't care to know. Suffice it to say that Mickey has kissed me!

It happened like this. We had just finished a very emotional scene and were refreshing ourselves with sodas from the studio commissary, standing outside in a secluded corner of a Western set. I was still trembling from the stress of concealing my emotions, and Mickey, the angel, seemed to sense how vulnerable I was and how delicately I needed to be treated. He came toward me, I impulsively flung my arms around his neck (he's not much taller than me) and gave him a kiss on his left cheek, and was about to kiss the other cheek, when my lips met his and we pressed them together. In a whirl we were clasped in each other's arms, again and again, never to leave off.

Is it right that I should have yielded so soon, that I am so ardent? I simply don't care. My happiness is complete.

Sunday, June 14, 1942

Dear Priscilla,

At age 13, my life is over.

Mickey has just been drafted. No strings that Uncle Louis can pull have been able to get him a deferment.

The love which has so recently bloomed between us must now undergo the immense strain of separation and anxiety which so many other couples are experiencing in this war-torn world.

What, oh, what is the use of war? Why can't people live peacefully together? Why do they make still more gigantic planes, still heavier bombs? Why should millions be spent daily on the war and yet there's not a penny available for medical services, artists or poor people? Why do some people starve, while there are surpluses rotting in other parts of the world? Why are people so crazy?

I have no answers. All I know is that I shall wait forever for Mickey to return.

Thursday, October 16, 1944

Dear Priscilla,

We have just had a letter from Pim and Mumsie!

After receiving a call-up notice from the S.S., they resolved to flee Holland. By many tortuous stratagems, they made their way to Switzerland, where they can now sit out the war in safety.

I am so relieved. I doubt they would ever have made it if they had been burdened with Margot and me. Finally the wisdom of our uncles' advice reaches its triumphant pinnacle!

Now, if only I had fresh news of Mickey. He survived D-day, but the war is hardly over yet . . .

Saturday, November 12, 1944

Dear Priscilla,

Mickey is coming home.

He has lost a leg.

Tuesday, January 3, 1945

Dear Priscilla,

The war has changed Mickey so much. Gone is the carefree boy I fell in love with. The horrible sights he witnessed, the events he participated in, have all scarred his soul.

Even I, safe at home, have been deeply shaken by the news out of liberated Germany of the so-called "concentration camps." All the friends of my youth seem to have vanished into them, consumed like so many moths around a klieg light.

I still love Mickey, of course, and forever shall. But I know that the brief childhood interlude we enjoyed will never return. After we are married, we shall enter our adulthood with no chance

of stepping back. (Odd, I never could quite picture myself as an adult.)

I resolve now to devote the rest of my life to taking care of Mickey.

And, of course, to my art.

Friday, December 19, 1949

Dear Priscilla,

Why do I write now, after all these years of silence, during which I was so busy with so many things that I neglected my oldest, my dearest friend? Only to mention that Margot has emigrated to Israel, to be with Mumsie and Pim. So much for my dream of us all living in one big house. (Though how anyone besides your long-suffering Anne could stand to live with poor Mickey is beyond me. . . .)

How I wish I could believe in something, anything, as fervently as Margot does. But

I fear my faith in anything outside the glorious artifice of the sound stage has completely disappeared.

I never really acknowledged to Margot how much her presence meant to me. We fought, as sisters will, but beneath it all was a deep understanding and affection.

As a final instance of her sisterly devotion, she managed to extract from Mickey, just before her departure, a promise to stop drinking.

Saturday, June 12, 1961

Dear Priscilla,

The divorce is final.

The proceedings were extremely messy—vile, in fact. In accordance with California state law, I was forced to prove mental cruelty charges against Mickey. Not a hard task, given his abusive nature when drunk, but nevertheless an unpleasant one. When I think back to the days of our innocent courtship, even to those few months after the marriage, when Mickey was making an honest effort to restart his career, I find myself in tears at what was lost in the war's cruel embrace. Could anything possibly have been worse? I ask in self-pity.

But then I take a couple of Miltowns, straighten my seams, and go on like the troupier I've long become.

Anyway, Mickey's lawyer in retaliation brought up that old scandal with Vincent Minnelli. Luckily, there was never any proof of my pregnancy—I made sure to avoid all photo-ops in those last few months—and no one's ever traced little Liza to that Minnesota orphanage. So, as I hoped, the judge's decision went completely in my favor.

Still, the whole affair was incredibly complex, wasteful of both my time and money. I still sometimes can't believe what my life has become these days.

Oh, Priscilla, if only I had stayed with Pim and Mumsie in Amsterdam! Surely, we could have escaped together to Switzerland! Surely after the war I could have gone back to the lovely little house at No. 46 Merwedeplein, take up with one of my old boyfriends, and gone on to become an average Dutch *hausfrau*! What a sweet life it would have been! No agents, no fractions co-stars, no face-lifts looming just down the road.

But the horrors I've just described are my only life now. There is no other path.

Yet—you know what? Despite everything, way down deep, beneath the pancake makeup, I still believe in the goodness of man. □

Astrid swore that no dragon would ever again threaten her village, but she little knew which was to be feared most—the dragon or the dragonslayer?

THE DRAGONSLAYER'S SWORD

BY RESA NELSON

Illustration by Pat Morrissey

HEST STOOD AROUND ASTRID like a wall when she worked, built in layers by the fire and the metal tools she used. The bellows wheezed as she pumped them, her arms aching, smoke stinging her eyes, until the charcoals burned bright yellow. The smithery was outside, adjacent to her cottage. Rows of tall, ancient poplars surrounded the cottage and the smithery, giving shade and privacy.

Astrid enjoyed the heat of the smithery, loving the way it baked into her skin. When it became too intense, she'd set down the horseshoe or the dagger or whatever else she might be tapping into shape, and step back into the cool of the day for relief. One September day, at such a moment, Astrid paused and turned around to find the dragonslayer standing behind her.

Astrid gasped because it was the first time anyone had seen her blacksmithing body. Although fully clothed, she felt as vulnerable as if he had just found her naked.

The body nature had given her was small but sturdy. As with any woman, Astrid's legs were the strongest part of her body, her thighs and rump large but muscular from running long distances between villages when she was a girl, delivering messages or trading light goods. Also as with any woman, Astrid's chest and arms were soft and rounded. She had not been born to develop the body of a blacksmith.

It wasn't unusual that Astrid changed her body when she worked, enlarging her chest and arms several times until the upper half of her body looked more like a man's physique than a woman's. Everyone changed their shape as they needed or wanted to. Only Lenore caused anyone's eyebrows to raise, because she was indiscreet about the times and places she chose to alter her body: Lenore would toss her head back and laugh as she'd sprout larger breasts and longer legs while crossing the road from one man's side to another. It was unusual for anyone else to change shape in such a crude manner. And yet Lenore was respected because no man had ever been able to alter her body by staring at it—Lenore had the confidence to maintain whatever shape she chose, no matter how anyone else might want her to appear.

Unlike Lenore, Astrid felt sensitive about changing to her blacksmith body, because it meant finding the male qualities within herself.

As a matter of respect, there was an unspoken agreement among the villagers that no one would find reason to visit the smithery during the hours

that Astrid worked. It was considered only rude to gaze upon the larger, more muscular shape to which she chose to alter her body. Everyone in the village understood this.

But as the dragonslayer was a foreigner who had only lived on the edge of the village for a short time, he was unaware of this custom. Because he did not live inside the village, he was not actually considered a part of it. His accent was strange, although he spoke their language perfectly. He was taller and stronger than any other man Astrid had ever seen, and nearly every woman felt a tug of attraction to his lean body and cool green eyes. His skin was several shades lighter than Astrid's and it was rough and weathered.

During the seven months since his arrival, Astrid had never seen him change.

Unlike anyone else Astrid had ever known, the dragonslayer's physical appearance could not be altered, either by what someone else thought of him, or by how he perceived himself. Or perhaps, unlike anyone else, he just knew how to keep changes at bay, as if they were dragons.

Astrid made an effort to be friendly, covering up her surprise at finding him watching her. "Hello, Taddeo. How are you?"

Leaning against a poplar, his gaze was casual but open. He stared at her muscles, slick and shiny with sweat. "I am well...are you?"

She licked her lips, tasting the salt in her sweat. Every other time Taddeo had seen her, she had worn the body everyone was accustomed to seeing, small and slim. This was the first time he had seen her in a different form.

Astrid was, at that moment, nearly as tall as the dragonslayer and probably his equal in strength. And yet, his stare made her feel vulnerable. No one had ever caught a glimpse of her when she forged, much less examined her blacksmith shape so intently. She wanted to change back to the body she wore in public, but



she considered her perception of herself and her body to be a private thing. She would sooner change her clothes in front of an audience than change her body.

And Taddeo wasn't an audience for whom she would ever remove her clothes. Their friendship was a professional one.

Astrid suddenly felt very aware of the clothes she wore: loose-fitting man's pants and a light cotton vest with large armholes cut away to free her movement. Not knowing what to do with her arms to conceal them, Astrid finally crossed them to steady their trembling. Unlike a man's corded musculature, her arms were smoothly defined. She tripled the size of the muscles in her arms and chest every time she prepared to blacksmith, in order to do the work that she loved. Until now, that much strength had made her feel good about herself.

"I'm fine," she said, answering his question. Astrid caught sight of the sword he held by his side, the one she had created for him. Inside the village, the dragonslayer usually walked unarmed. "The Magenta!" she said, relieved to find something to talk about. "Is she serving you well?"

Taddeo smiled strangely for a moment, then flourished the sword and held it up, tilting it until the sunlight struck its polished blade. He cocked his head sharply at Astrid and laughed. "Have you had no lizard meat upon your table lately?"

Astrid nodded, but her smile was a small one. Only a few days ago, Taddeo had left the fresh corpse of a young dragon in the town center. Stretched out on the soft grass, it measured the length of four horses from snout to the tip of its spiked tail. Its neck was long and slender, as was its tail. The dragon's skin was gray with a lavender sheen, rough, and dry. Its throat and belly, unscaled and tender, had been slit.

Astrid had stared at its eyes, large as saucers, lifeless. Eyes like those had stared at Natalia, the butcher's daughter, only eight months ago. Apparently, dragons found vital organs to be delicacies and devoured them first. Then they ripped the meat from the bone. Natalia's head had been left relatively intact, but the rest of her was grisly. She had been killed a few weeks after DiStephan, the previous dragonslayer, had disappeared and a few weeks before Taddeo's services had been contracted. In that short time, a dozen crops were destroyed and several herds of livestock were ravaged.

Natalia's body was discovered by the river; DiStephan's body was never found.

This dragon, dead on the town green, might have been the same one that killed Natalia.

The butcher must have thought so, judging by the way he tore it apart. But then, the butcher had attacked every dragon corpse that Taddeo had deposited on the town green with a frenzy.

"I received my share of the meat," Astrid said in a hushed voice. Searching for something else to say, Astrid gulped. "It was very tender."

Taddeo held his head slightly higher and nodded as if he had performed a great personal service for the blacksmith. "It pleases me that you are satisfied." Again, he gazed unashamedly and with approval at her arms and chest. "I wish I were as pleased with the quality of the women in your village."

Astrid returned his stare, unsure if she had understood him. "The women here are too small," he said matter-of-factly. "There is nothing to them, no meat on their bones. Their arms and legs are like twigs."

Astrid was stunned into silence, searching his face for a sign of jest. He had shown her nothing but kindness and courtesy before this moment. And the dragonslayer's sword... she had imagined that it had forged a bond between them. A bond of mutual respect.

She groped for a way to change the course of the conversation. Taddeo's behavior was strange and she had no desire to see more.

The dragonslayer's sword. Perhaps that was why he had come to her.

"The Magenta," she said. "Did you bring her to me for sharpening?"

Taddeo's eyes narrowed as they searched hers, then his expression relaxed into friendliness. "The stone fell from her setting." He opened his free hand, and the crimson-colored gem rested there. "Would you replace it for me?" He held out the sword to her.

Astrid took it from him. She was the blacksmith, a craftsman. The weight of the sword resting in her hands renewed her professional persona. Smiling, she said, "Taddeo, I already told you—I am a blacksmith, not a jeweler."

"I have traveled widely," he said, holding his posture proudly. "Your work is as fine as any jeweler's."

Astrid held her tongue. The dragonslayer had boasted of his travels many times to her, and she was always torn between feelings of jealousy and annoyance. Astrid had not traveled since her girlhood days as a runner and messenger, and she longed for a reason to travel widely. At the same time, she was content with who she was and what she had accomplished, even if it was an accomplishment confined to the small boundaries of her village. She refrained from reacting to what she considered to be the dragonslayer's condescension. "Beamon Waterson can help you," she said. "He is a fine jeweler."

Taddeo spoke evenly. "My people believe that continuity yields consistency. You created a beautiful weapon from a lump of iron. I want no one else to touch the Magenta other than her creator and her master." He paused and bowed slightly. "You were very kind to give her to me. This time, though, you must accept payment for your labor."

Payment.
Astrid thought of Natalia. Her life had been the cost of DiStephan's disappearance. The price of losing a dragonslayer had been much too high to pay, a price that must never be paid again. And because Astrid believed that she was to blame for Natalia's death, she had promised herself to do whatever was necessary to keep a dragonslayer at hand.

"I can't accept your money," Astrid said, hiding her feeling of guilt over Natalia's death. "Your helping the village is payment enough." She shifted her weight from one foot to the other, uncomfortable. "After all, it is September."

Dragon eggs hatched in February each year, perhaps as far away as 100 miles north of Astrid's village. Dragon fledglings left the nest by July, migrating south to find a safe place to hibernate for the winter. Sometimes they hibernated nearby, re-emerging in the spring such as the dragon that had killed Natalia, a mother dragon with a vengeance. The most dangerous time of the year was September, when young dragons migrated south, ravaging the land for food. Now was when Taddeo's services were needed the most.

Taddeo fingered the crimson-colored gem. "I found this once when I cut open a lizard's gullet. I have found several like it, as well as some that are different in color but just as beautiful. I believe that once I find and kill the mother lizard, I will find even more."

He was lying. Astrid was sure of it. There were some people in the village who still believed in the folk tales of dragons guarding treasure, but Astrid didn't believe in magic. The dragons were just what Taddeo said they were: lizards. And there were fewer these days than she remembered from childhood. Along with most of the villagers, she believed that in another 10 years, dragons would be scarcer, if any were alive at all.

If Taddeo had more gems in his possession, he must have acquired them in his travels.

His eyes glinted, darkly. "I insist that you accept."

Baubles. Pretty baubles.
"No, thank you," she said quietly. "I will reset the stone as my share of the payment for your services."

She held his gaze until he shrugged and broke it. "As you wish." He handed the gem to her. "You should travel with me sometime."

"What?" Astrid bit her tongue, wishing she had ignored him. He shrugged again. "I have no plans to stay here. You should travel and see different sights. Meet different people, experience different cultures. My people, for instance, are not farmers like yours. My people are hunters. We have an entirely different way of living, different customs." He maintained eye contact with Astrid. "For example, I have noticed that the men in your village are passive. That is why they never hunt dragons—they lack aggressiveness and self-confidence."

It was true. DiStephan had been an exception. Native-born to the village, he was the only man she'd known who could keep his body strong under the gaze of a dragon.

She'd heard stories of how a man's body would shrivel and collapse under a dragon's stare, because the dragon perceived the man to be weak and insignificant.

She'd heard the village healers speculate that dragons had grown to gigantic proportions because their bodies inflated in keeping with their views of themselves. But those were, most likely, tales created by storytellers.

What Astrid knew to be true was that the remains of anyone slaughtered by a dragon *did* seem different from the way she remembered them alive—smaller and weaker and with less meat on the bones than what *should* have been there. Whether this was due to the dragon's belief or the victim's lack of belief—or just the fact that the dragon had eaten part of the body by the time the victim was found, Astrid didn't know.

"When a passive man—such as those here in your village—is interested in a woman," Taddeo said coolly, "he sits back and waits for her to come to him."

Astrid held the sword in one hand and the gem in the other. A gust of wind fanned the fire, and it whooshed behind her. "Among my people, a man will pursue a woman until she relents."

Astrid stifled a gasp as she felt a binding sensation across her chest. Small tearing sounds broke the silence between them. She felt the lacing between her breasts grow taut against the vest eyelids.

Taddeo smirked and held her gaze steadily. "I suppose I am a combination of both cultures." His face assumed an expression of innocence. "Would a week's time be enough for you to re-set the Magenta?"

Astrid struggled to maintain her composure. "She will be ready the day after next."

For a moment, he let his gaze drop. He met her eyes again and smiled. "Good."

Astrid watched him walk away. As the lacing began to pull from the vest, she clasped it with one hand. She dropped the sword and ran through the smithery and into her own cottage, into her bedroom, and stood before the mirror on the wall.

She was different. The dragonslayer had imagined her as he wanted her to be, and that act had changed her.

Astrid pulled the remaining laces from her vest and held it open. Her breasts had moved so that they were higher on her chest and set further apart. They had doubled in size but were firm and fully rounded. The nipples had lightened in color and were erect.

They were fine breasts, but they weren't hers. They were disproportionate with the rest of her body. The shape she had acquired over the years pleased her. This change made her look top-heavy, like a caricature of a woman. She felt awkward and ungainly.

Unnerved, she stared at herself. Never had anyone had a perception strong enough to change her in such a noticeable way. On occasion, after spending time with others, she might find slight changes in her appearance: a more even skin tone, her nose a bit longer or a bit shorter. It was customary to refrain from intruding upon another's appearance whenever possible.

And Astrid's view of herself was usually strong enough to keep her body as she liked it.

Astrid closed her eyes and tried to picture what her body used to look like. She touched her breasts, stroking them, trying to imagine what they used to feel like.

Nothing moved, nothing shifted. Nothing changed.

Astrid opened her eyes. All she had been able to think about was Natalia.

And DiStephan.

Astrid waited until the spinning sound began to grate and slow before knocking on the door jamb.

"Astrid!" Mauri looked up in surprise. She sat at her potter's wheel. Her hair was plaited into several braids and pinned up, leaving soft wisps at the nape of her neck. Her hands were gray and slick with the clay she worked with, the edges of it pale and dry on her wrists.

Astrid leaned against the door jamb, wanting to walk in, and at the same moment wishing she had never left her own cottage.

Astrid's body had kept the shape Taddeo had left her with. For the first time in her life, she was unable to change herself. She stood in Mauri's doorway, too tall and too muscular. She wore large, loose clothing and kept her arms crossed in front of her breasts, which were still much too large. "I didn't know you were busy. I don't want to interrupt you."

Mauri smiled, giving no indication that she noticed the difference in Astrid's appearance. To do so would have been insensitive. "Nonsense," she said. "Come in and sit down—talk with me a while."

Astrid paused, feeling foolish for having left the safety of her home, for exposing her problem, then shook her head. "I should go home."

Mauri kept her voice even and calm. "Let me show you what I have made. Here—you can sit at the wheel."

Astrid hesitated, then sat on the floor, only wanting to be small again, not wanting her friend to notice her enormous size.

Again, Mauri paid no notice. She took a vase, fired cobalt blue, from a shelf. The vase was slender and long-necked. "This is for Kamella. Last week at church she asked me to make a vase. Did you know that Beamon Waterson is courting her? Kamella said he brought a handful of field lilies to her, bright yellow ones."

Astrid picked up a stone from the floor. It was the size of her thumbnail, coated with gray pottery dust. Cool to the touch, Astrid thought. Bloodless.

"I think Beamon is sweet. I know he seems ill-mannered, but his heart is kind. And after having it broken in such a sad way," Mauri shook her head, her voice quiet and compassionate. "I do not know how I would survive finding my lover's body. I know he still misses Natalia. I think he's courageous to pick flowers for another."

Astrid turned the stone over in her hand. Everyone believed DiStephan had been killed by the dragon that had killed Natalia. His body had never been found, so everyone assumed he had been devoured in the dragon's lair.

"He and Kamella would make a good match, I think. Beamon needs someone who can return his kindness."

No one had known they were lovers. DiStephan the dragonslayer and Astrid the blacksmith—it had been an odd coupling that no one would have suspected. They quarreled often, and when

she saw him kill a dragon before her eyes, Astrid experienced something she never thought possible; she was more frightened and horrified of DiStephan than she had been of the dragon.

In a moment of terror, she'd demanded that DiStephan leave so that he could not do to her what she had seen him do to the dragon. As confused and disturbed as his lover, DiStephan had vanished without a word to anyone.

Mauri examined her friend sitting on the floor and rubbing the rough edges of a stone with her thumb. Mauri sat down beside her and held out the vase. "I hope this pleases Kamella. Do you think it will?"

Had it not been for Astrid's demand, DiStephan would not have left the village.

And Natalia would not have lost her life to a dragon.

"It is a fine vase," Astrid said, absently. She could never make demands upon another dragonslayer.

"I could make another for you," Mauri said. "Perhaps someone will soon be picking flowers for you."

Astrid looked at her sharply, remembering Taddeo's unwavering stare. Under his stare, she had felt like the rock she had picked up from Mauri's floor. Bloodless.

"I have to leave now," Astrid said.

Mauri set the vase down. Gray smudges from the clay on her hands dotted the cobalt glass. The clay had dried completely, making her hands look cracked and dried. Quietly, she said, "Do not allow others to change you. Who and what you want to be is your choice."

Astrid looked at her own hands, larger than they should be. "I have no choice. I have a responsibility to meet."

"Your responsibility is to yourself."

Astrid paused, wondering, as she had often done before, if somehow Mauri knew about DiStephan. If she'd guessed from the days when Astrid had glowed in her radiant feelings of love for DiStephan, and the days after he'd left, when Astrid had felt herself grow as quiet as the forest. She shook her head. "No. There are times when the stakes are too high. It is September, and I can feel dragons approaching. Sometimes I think I can smell them in the air."

"How can you assume responsibility for others until you are responsible to yourself?"

Astrid hesitated, turning the stone over in her hand. She began to answer but stopped abruptly as she turned toward Mauri. Astrid was so startled that she forgot what she had meant to say.

Mauri had changed. Her hands were tapered and graceful. Her eyes were larger and deeper set. Her cheekbones, higher.

Mauri was the same. It was just that a little more of the beauty within had surfaced.

Astrid saw Taddeo as he approached the smithery. This time, she was not caught off-guard. She glanced at the sword leaning against a nearby tree stump, and smiled.

He leered at her, the expression in his eyes assuming more than it should. "I have no time to stop for the Magenta. I have business to attend to, and it would be inappropriate to bring a weapon with me. I hope you will be able to deliver her to my home at noon."

Astrid looked at her work. "No. I don't have time to deliver."

"Yes, but this is the Magenta—she is something special. Tonight, then?"

"No," Astrid said, looking evenly at Taddeo. "You may have her now or return some other time."

Insult edged his voice as he looked at the sword by the tree stump. "Where is the Magenta's stone?" Imbedded in the hilt was not the crimson-colored stone, but a small rock.

"Once in my hands, the gem turned to stone," she said. Astrid gauged his reaction: surprise followed by hesitation. Followed by a tolerant but determined smile.

As she had suspected, he knew that such a thing was impossible. Unless one believed in magic and enchantment.

There was another sword resting on top of the anvil behind Astrid. She turned, then handed the Magenta—with the gemstone replaced—to Taddeo.

He smiled, examining the blacksmith's work. "Impressive, as always. If you are interested, there are other weapons I would like you to forge for me."

Taddeo had conceded defeat in attempting to lure her into his lair. Now he sought other reasons to seek contact with her. Reluctantly. "I am sorry, but I would not have the time."

The tone of Taddeo's voice did not alter. "I would pay for them, of course." He glanced at her. "Whatever price you desire."

"I am committed to other work."

"At a later time, then."

"No," Astrid said, softly. "I think not."

As she watched, careful to show no reaction, Taddeo's face changed. A leer etched itself darkly in his eyes as they became narrower and smaller. His nose grew misshapen. The lines that had so beautifully defined his jaw and cheekbones weakened. His posture slackened and his youth faded.

"There is only one other blacksmith in the area, three villages west of here," he said. "And the quality of his work lacks much. Perhaps it is time to seek a change. Perhaps I have killed enough lizards for this village." He paused, waiting for Astrid to protest. "There are many other villages seeking my service."

Instead of offering protest, Astrid said, "That is a decision you alone can make."

His eyes squinted in an unbecoming manner as he searched her face.

Astrid fought the sorrow that threatened to well within her. She wanted to remember Taddeo as she had known him, not as he had become. As hard as she tried, she couldn't remember exactly what he had looked like, only moments ago.

Astrid started at the rumble of thunder. And yet when she looked up, the sky was clear and blue.

Taddeo raised his head, his nostrils flaring. He sniffed the air like a tracking dog. Then he knelt, laying one ear to the ground.

Astrid cried out as a dragon came crashing through the poplars, someone screaming in the distance.

Dark it was, and yellow-eyed, opening its jaws as it lowered its belly to the ground, sizing up its prey. The dragon's scales were dark and mottled, its young muscles fairly bursting from its skin.

"Aiy yuh!" Taddeo cried in feral rage, grasping the hilt of the Magenta. As he leapt forward, the Magenta held him back. The sword was too heavy for him to wield.

"Taddeo!" Astrid said in horror.

The dragonslayer looked at the Magenta in disbelief, as if his best friend had betrayed him. Then he looked at his arms and his body, no longer large and lean, but now withered with age. Until this moment, Taddeo had not noticed how severely Astrid's perception had changed him.

The dragon inhaled their fear, its tail cracking the wood on the poplar trunks as it lashed back and forth between them.

Taddeo's gaze lifted until his eyes met Astrid's. Enraged, he shouted, "Change me back!"

But she did not hear the words of the dragonslayer. Her eyes had met yellow eyes the size of saucers, primal eyes.

Unwittingly, her breath began to match the rhythm of the lizard's panting.

its teeth glistened, ivory sharp in its slackened jaw.

"Aiy yah!" Taddeo cried, mustering his last remaining strength, pulling with all his might on the hilt. Still unable to raise the sword, he dragged it in the dust until the tip lay between him and the dragon.

With the agility of a cat pinning a mouse by the tail, the dragon slapped the sword flat on the ground with one foot.

Taddeo shouted, refusing to release the hilt, falling to the ground with the sword. The dragon's toenail had sliced Taddeo's cheekbone. The wound raised like a welt for a moment, then bled steadily. Oblivious, Taddeo grimaced, kicking at the dragon's foot to make it let go of the Magenta.

The dragon's jaw dropped slightly, and for a moment it looked as if it were smiling.

Like a mountain cat, Taddeo screeched in determination, holding onto the hilt of the Magenta with both hands, pivoting on his side on the ground, pushing with both feet against the dragon's foot, the tendons stretching taut in his face and neck and arms.

With its free front foot, the dragon pinned Taddeo's head to the ground.

"No!" Astrid cried. As rage woke her, she reached for the sword leaning against the tree stump. She grabbed the hilt of the new sword she'd made, a sword with a hilt shaped to fit her own hand.

In a blind fury, Astrid ran to the dragon's face, both hands gripping the sword spear-like above her head, aiming the point directly at the dragon's yellow eye. "Let him go!" she shouted at the dragon.

Defiantly, the dragon batted Astrid in the chest, knocking the sword out of her hands and the wind out of her lungs.

Soundlessly, full of hate, she grappled for her sword, stumbled toward the dragon, and plunged the blade in the direction of the dragon's heart.

Agilely, the dragon moved, only getting nicked by the tip of Astrid's sword. In moving, it let go of the Magenta and Taddeo, who grasped his own throat, wheezing.

Astrid fell, pulled by the force of her missed blow, landing face first in the dust. Rolling over quickly, she scrambled up to find the dragon now behind her. Spinning to face it, she was struck numb with horror.

In the dragon's face inches away from hers, she saw her face reflected in its amber eyes. And what she saw on her own face was what she had seen on her lover's face the day she had seen him kill a dragon, the day she had felt so frightened of what she had seen that she demanded he leave.

It wasn't an adult dragon that DiStephan had killed or even a fledgling. It was a hatchling, weak and vulnerable, the size of a small dog. But DiStephan's fighting instinct had kicked in—all he knew was that it was a dragon, and he fought with full force, not just killing the hatchling, but dismembering it with a murderous vengeance, mindlessly, until what was left of the hatchling was unrecognizable. Astrid and DiStephan had been out in the country on a picnic when DiStephan had smelled dragon in the air.

Astrid hadn't understood what had happened, or why, and wondered if someday DiStephan might mistake her for a dragon if he thought he smelled one in the air. But now she saw the desire to kill for the sake of killing on her own face, and it was something she never imagined she'd see.

Taddeo's face was covered with blood and dust, and he cried out again as he pulled the Magenta weakly toward the dragon, barely nudging its belly.

The dragon batted Taddeo across the smithery yard, then raised its foot to Astrid.

"No!" she shouted. She raised her sword steadily, grasping it with both wrists cocked. "I don't want to hurt you!" she screamed, wanting to cry.

The dragon snorted, its eyes narrowing.

"I've heard about you," she said shakily, staring back. "That you make people smaller and weaker, and sometimes they're so frightened they turn into deer and the only way you can tell they were once human is to look at their eyes, because that's all that's left of their humanity." Astrid shook her head slightly, looking straight into the dragon's eyes. "You can't do that to me! And I won't let you do that to my people!"

The dragon stepped closer, but Astrid stood her ground, the blade of the sword stood between them, one sharp edge touching the dragon's skin; the other, her own.

"I know you're hungry," she said still crying. "But don't eat my people. There are animals in the forest. There are grain fields and bushes of wild berries to the south. There is food all around—you don't need us!"

As the dragon leaned forward, she pressed back the pressure with the blade, still not cutting the dragon's skin. "I know you don't understand what I'm saying," Astrid said. "But I think you understand what I mean."

The dragon sniffed her hair, then licked the sweat from her arms, sending chills down Astrid's back. Before Astrid could blink, the dragon sprang back through the poplars.

Trembling, Astrid collapsed in the dirt, both hands still clinging to the hilt of her sword.

With a thud, Taddeo sat next to her. He stared at the poplars in disbelief. "That," he said, panting, "I have never seen. The beast took you up on your offer."

"Dragons aren't that much different than you or me," Astrid said, shaken. "They just live the best way they know how."

Taddeo looked younger but still weary. He looked as if he'd regained most of his strength. "If you were not so compassionate, you could be a dragonslayer." Taddeo shook his head, looking at Astrid with admiration and only a hint of desire.

Astrid stared at the poplars, gasping, feeling her heart shake inside. It was a few moments before she had the presence of mind to speak.

"I don't want to be a dragonslayer," she said, thinking of DiStephan, now understanding the primitive rage he had felt when he slaughtered the hatchling on a gentle spring day. Astrid wondered if she had panicked or if she had possibly saved her life by demanding that he leave. She believed that she would never really know the answer. Just as she would never know whether the dragon had understood her or just picked up a more interesting scent in the air.

"You realize, of course," Taddeo said, standing and offering her a hand up, "that you just dismissed a week's meal for the village?"

Astrid accepted his hand, leaning on her sword as she stood. "There will be others." She trembled, wiping the tears from her face, looking out toward the poplars. "Dragon season has only just begun." She looked back at Taddeo, squinting. "And I trust you will not allow any other dragon to get away."

Taddeo caught his breath, looked at her, then relaxed into a smile. "No," he said confidently. "That is the last one to get away."

Realizing that her clothes felt loose, Astrid looked down to see that her body had returned to its normal shape and size.

"That happened when you fought the dragon," Taddeo said. "You returned to yourself."

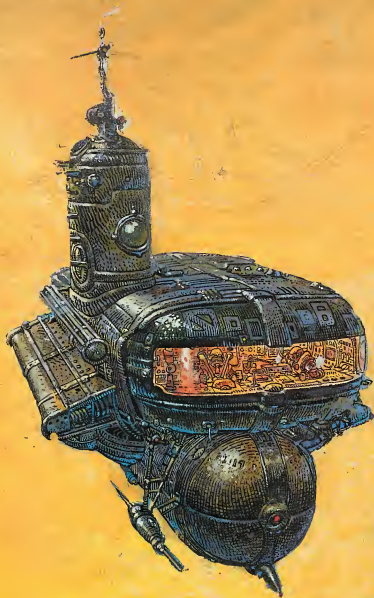
Reeling awkward and hesitant, Astrid gave him a slight smile. "You've returned to yourself, too."

"Yes," Taddeo said, clearing his throat. "As has the Magenta."

He bowed slightly, holding the Magenta between his hands as if in prayer. "Thank you for your work."

Astrid waved as he left, then hugged the body to which she'd come back.

"You're welcome," she said, watching the dragonslayer walk away with the sword she had fashioned for him. □



Had the cybernetic engineer fled dying Lister IV and survived the mind-bomb—only to be brought down by the power of love?

A TALE FROM THE WAR

BY DON WEBB

Illustrations by Moebius

This happened in the last centuries of the Beletrín war to my grandfather. On Lister IV there was a group of cybernetic engineers, who because of their connections with the Terran League, knew that their planet had been designated as a "strategic loss." Instead of dying as did so many other human patriots, they stole a small spacecraft and parked

in orbit on the other side of the gas giant Lister VI. The great wavicle known as a mind-bomb engulfed Lister IV. Soon the 12 engineers found the craft to be small. For a year they cautiously maneuvered among the moons of the gas giant. On a frosty planetoid they found the ruins of another star-faring civilization, and for a season they practiced their arts by trying to revive these ancient machines, but even this soon palled. For two long orbits of the ponderous planet they hid in the haunted moon as a vast Beletrín ship cruised the system. Their fear of the great black cruiser helped them pass the time. But the cruiser left and their frustration returned.

Some argued that they should attempt to contact the Terran League and accept the fate of a prison planet. Others spoke of returning to Lister IV, where they could fashion companions by their arts. Each could live several hundred kilometers from the others, and they would never have to see each other's stinking faces again.

But there had been the mind-bomb, and fragments of it might still be crawling along the magnetic fields of the planet. Above all, the engineers valued their minds. So fear and desire held them in stasis.

On the "day" they maneuvered their spacecraft into orbit around the seventh (and least interesting) moon, they came to a decision. The craft had a small one-man probe. They could send one of their number to Lister IV and if he or she survived, they would know it was safe to return. And if they perished—well at least it would be a little less crowded. So a program determined which among them—being sure to send neither the least nor the greatest of their craft—to send to Lister IV.

The lot fell upon my grandfather, and they stocked the probe with all manner of things he might need. As they stocked these things, they began to envy my grandfather. What if he found Lister

IV clean of Beletrín mischief? What if the green hills of home proved so wonderful that he faked his demise?

They paused in their packing and held my grandfather in a small cell for three days. They considered torturing him for these crimes he might commit. After a long day with no food or drink, the craftiest of the engineers told him, "We have made a reading of your mind so precise that we can find it even if you download it from your brain into a machine. We can find it even if you put it in cold storage. If you have not returned to us by the northern winter solstice, we will send a sending against you. So strong will it be that any machine on the planet will seek you out and destroy you. Have a pleasant trip."

The onboard computers drove the probe. As he approached Lister IV, my grandfather saw the polar auroras in full flower. The remnants of the mind-bomb were still deteriorating, ionizing the air in sheets of cascading color. He had instructed the probe to make one equatorial and one polar orbit, making full scans for sentient life, but he belayed that order. The sensors would never get through. So he picked Helka, a town of medium size, as his destination.

As the ship entered the atmosphere, his vision began to blur and he became very sleepy. The bulkheads of the probe began to melt and twist, and he saw a greater darkness beyond. The ship spread out. He slapped at the panel that disengaged all computer control. He tried to punch in a manual landing sequence on the spiny hide of a fire-breathing cactus. His purple blood sang comic highlights from *The Marriage of Figaro*. In the lemon sky above, he saw a Beletrín cruiser descending. He tried to crawl through the smell of green ideas, but his tongue was too long and kept wrapping about vermillion brain coral. A locust whispered something in his ear, and then he hurt very badly.

THE PROBE HAD CRASHED INTO Robotic Police Station No. 5. When the effects of the mind-bomb largely passed, my grandfather found that the AI systems and their backups were hopelessly scrambled. The probe could be flown. If he got it away from the magnetosphere of Lister IV, the engineers could return him by remote control. The simple computers seemed all right and he released a hoard of mouse robots to effect minor repairs, forage for fuel, and effect perimeter scanning. He hoped that he was OK too. In the corners of his vision hair would grow or dark cats would leap at him. Every few minutes he seemed to hear, "Til kiss you later I'm eating a potato." Or he would sneeze uncontrollably.

The robot mice scurried over the surface of the probe, sounding like a gentle metal rain. Eating into the walls of the station they had managed to level the probe. Grandfather opened the door and, armed with only a few standard cyber-engineering tools, ventured out.

The town council of Helka in their whimsy had constructed its robot police in the form of giant chess pieces. These 2- to 3-meter tall figures lay throughout the green building. The walls and floors bore weapon burns. Driven mad by the mind-bomb, they had slain countless hallucinatory enemies.

"Nov shamuz ka pop!" said a fallen knight. The metal mice ate into their bodies seeking necessary circuits. Grandfather saw his first skeleton. He had never in his life seen a dead man—or any evidence of death. The very old always downloaded their minds. But those archives would be gone too—save for the minds of the very rich, who could afford to have copies on other worlds. Death was considered a reasonable risk on frontier worlds. He sat with the skeleton for awhile, trying to imagine what death could be like. Imagination. Dead. Imagine.

"Have the birds flown south for the winter?" said a door, and for an instant the world turned all manner of vivid pinks.

Outside there were smashed bones and smashed Sirian ecosystems. It was a quiet world. Except for a few of the stupider pseudo-insects and the dumbest maintenance robots—nothing moved. With his tools, my grandfather was able to animate a small luxury land vehicle. While the mice prepared the probe for relaunch, he would go exploring.

He could cover 300 kilometers a day. He dared not use his radio; although he was fairly sure that the mind-bomb was only active in the upper atmosphere—he didn't want to attract any fragments. Once he saw a great radio telescope, its unmoving bowl crawling with colored lights, still-living fragments of the mind-bomb. He drove nonstop for 12 hours to get away from it.

After a month he decided to return to the probe and fly back to Lister VI. Lister IV was inhabitable, although special shielding would be required to pass through the upper atmosphere. He theorized that if the probe made a high-speed launch at and perpendicular to the equator, the limited exposure to the field would probably not damage his mind further. He seldom heard voices anymore. It had been five days since his car had said "Dull, empty, thud." He had—much to his surprise—grown lonely during the month. The voices in the stale

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air of the spacecraft seemed more desirable than the wind in the trees.

When first he saw the sunlight on her dark blue hair, he thought he was hallucinating. She stood tall and thin among the ruins of a theatre. She pulled pieces of tile off the fragment of wall. There was something of faerie about her, and when she half-turned to put a particularly beautiful fragment of tile in her basket, Grandfather was spellbound.

She saw him and, grabbing up her tiny basket, gave a little cry.

He saw first her eyes, darker blue than her hair, and then her fear. She was either real and alive or his mind had become totally unhinged. None of the hallucinations had lasted this long.

"Hello," he said. "Don't be afraid, I'm not here to steal your pretty things."

She put down her basket and walked slowly toward him. She put out her right hand and touched him just beneath his right eye. That warm and light touch meant more to him than anything before in his life, and his eyes began to tear.

"You're alive," she said.

"I'm alive," he said. "Are you the only one left?"

SHE HAD MADE A HOME OUT OF A SMALL RESORT COTTAGE. SHE wasn't sure of what she had been or what she had done before the madness. She remembered the moon becoming blood and raining down on the forest of aluminum foil trees. She remembered talking to tall mushrooms and dancing with the stones. She remembered the fawns and satyrs that came out of the living shadows and the strange games they had played. She remembered the talking statues and the white people with heads of rams who flew over her house or peered in her windows at night.

She had begun to build a wall around her cottage so that she would feel safe at night when the aurora borealis turned the sky into a neon light show.

She wanted more than anything for my grandfather to stay. He wanted more than anything to stay. And it was two months to the northern solstice.

So he remained. Each day when she went out to collect items for her wall, she wouldn't let him come along. She said that since he was going to leave her in a couple of months, she didn't want

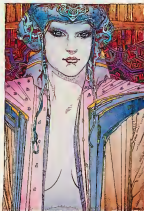
anything to remind her of him. If he was going to be so cruel as to leave her.

He protested that it wasn't cruelty. Just self-preservation.

She brought back interesting things for her wall. Bright green copper-bearing rocks, ornamental tile, human skulls, robot arms, fragments of sculpture, Sirian claws, rock crystal, melted metal and glass. The wall sparkled in the sun. Moss grew on claw and skull. There was something crazy about the wall. Something in the sum of its parts that pointed in a direction that his mind couldn't go or wouldn't go. Something half-remembered or glimpsed in a dream. The wall stood to her waist. She'd already found a massive iron gate. He couldn't imagine how she had carried it and installed it.

He offered to animate some robots for her. She declined.

But otherwise they were happy. They read to one another—or tended her



garden—or scavenged delicacies from the finest homes of the city. They rode to the museums, to the canyons, to the Sirian sonic sculpture gardens. They sang together. They made love, and my grandfather came to the realization that this was the happiest he'd ever been—ever could be.

He told her that he would return to her after he reported to the engineers. She said he would never return and that she would spend the rest of her days thinking that he had been a sweet dream in her life of nightmare. "Besides," she asked, "What could happen?"

"The engineers would create a great self-sustaining wavicle. It would pass through space drawing energy into its structure much as an amoeba draws food into itself. It would seek me out—because it knows exactly what my energy tastes like. And then it would animate the robots—spot-welding broken wires, punching through connectors—and the machine would become a monstrous engine of annihilation."

"Like what the Beletrin sent?"

"The opposite. Their sending increased entropy, ours is negen-tropic. Ours is a life-form. Theirs for lack of a better word is a death-form. That is why we fear the Beletrin so much. We fear they may be like their weapons."

"Your weapon brings death."

"It brings death through its own life like the pseudo-tigers in the hills."

"Or like men. Men bring death through their life."

"Or like men."

IN THE SIXTH WEEK OF HIS STAY, MY GRANDFATHER HAD TWO MORE surprises. The first was seeing her open her stomach. They had had a wonderful meal of ssarinst, the only Sirian food he found tasty. She had said she needed a walk, and he decided to catch up with her as a lover's game. He tracked her quietly through the woods.

She sat on a stump and by drawing a line with her index finger opened her stomach. She removed a bag full of food, dumped out three quarters of it, and replaced it.

He realized that she must have been a very expensive pleasure robot. She would only need a little food for her organic parts. Probably one that a rich executive kept stashed deep underground—taking it out for holidays or traveling. The shielding must have saved it—only disrupting the stasis field that kept it—*NQ kept her*, he decided—fresh. He realized that he loved her, and if she wanted her secret kept, it would be kept. He walked away very quietly. He would never follow her again.

The second surprise is a surprise to husbands everywhere. She was pregnant. He knew that the more expensive models had this capacity. It was the ultimate ego boost—the robot created a DNA-less egg and took the chromosomes from the semen to create a full set of chromosomes. The robot, which had observed and analyzed the personality of her master, would recreate that personality in the child. She said that since he was going—she would make sure she wasn't alone.

When the wall was as high as her head, the first feathery flakes of snow fell. My grandfather looked out that morning and suddenly realized that he had lost track of time. He asked her what day it was; and she smiled, and told him, it was two days before winter solstice.

He ran for his car, but she stopped him. He could never make it back to the moons of Lister IV in two days. If he was going to die—wouldn't he want to die with her? He saw her reasoning and went in to stoke the fire.

*...then it would
animate the robots
and the machine
would become a
monstrous engine
of annihilation.*

"Besides," she said, "A love like ours is a rare thing and I think I may be able to stop their sending."

The day of the solstice came and he lived; but when night came, he became very drowsy. The sending was interacting with his energies. He would fall in and out of sleep. She became busy. She knocked down a section of her wall. She was much, much stronger than he had guessed. She found a glittery black something. She seemed to be talking to it.

Around 8 p.m., the long parade of broken robots began to make its way from town. Some hopped on one leg. Others lurched along on three. One of the police robots, a black knight who glided on electromagnetic waves of force, led the procession. My grandfather watched the sky, because he felt too weak to run or flee. He saw that for the first time the sky was clear of Beletrin aurora.

My grandmother, for as many of you have guessed by now, this was she, stood her ground in the broken section of wall. She warned the damaged machines that this was her home and that they should turn back. But the machines marched for only one purpose.

When they had come within four meters, the police robot tried to fire on her. But its faulty control merely took out more of the wall.

My grandmother lobbed the black crystal into their midst. For an instant nothing happened, then a corona discharge flamed the robots. The floating knight fell and the others stopped moving. Then it was dark and as grandfather lost consciousness, he saw her begin rebuilding her wall.

It snowed a lot in the winter, and grandmother's belly began to swell. Grandfather told her that he must return by the spring equinox, because the engineers would try again. They would practice their dark craft until they were able to overcome her secrets.

So again they played the long game of her coy love. She convinced him that the people in their tiny ship were not of the forgive-and-forget variety. As soon as they knew for sure that Lister IV was safe, he was a dead man. If he refused to them, they would seek him out. And certainly they would kill him the instant his ship was seen by their electronic eyes. Just as he had lived for love, he must trust her love for him to live.

He asked where she had learned arts that were beyond his engineering. She said that if he knew, he would know fear. He remembered the stale air of the small ship during the months they had watched the Beletrin cruiser. So he never asked.

Flowers of every color and form bloomed, and the flowering pseudo-grass of Lister IV put forth its tiny saffron florets. Everything was in life save for my grandfather's mind, which was in the midst of death.

"I have calculated," my grandmother said, "that I may not be able to stop the next sending of the engineers. We will have to have help. Come with me."

My grandmother, now big with child, led him to one of the largest houses in the nearby city. It had been made in the neoclassical Terran style, with red brick and white-painted columns. The security system of the house was up and running. A brief heat passed over my grandfather as he walked toward the gate; two Grecian statues turned toward him. He guessed there were lasers within their eyes. The gate swung open.

"How does this work?" he asked. "Why is any of this up?"

"I don't know," she said. "It wasn't this way before."

The front door opened and a headless butler robot showed them the most opulence that a frontier planet could manage. Through

the kitchen, down to a wine cellar, through a secret door to an elevator. Then down. Deep.

Beyond the elevator door lay a pleasure garden to end all pleasure gardens. Fountains of wine, beautiful birds in jeweled cages, deep living carpets of neustra, gentle harp music. My grandfather guessed that her master must have survived and begun his paradise.

Then she passed beyond an ebony column. On the other side, the smooth marble wall was broken by an angry vent. She went into the darkness beyond. He activated a small hand light, but she struck it from his hand.

The walls of the cave were made of a dark crystalline material. He recognized it, for it was used in the weapon she'd employed, and also in the ancient machinery he'd helped examine on a moon of Lister VI.

Something in the cave spoke, "Foster daughter, I see you are with child."

"Yes, I am, and I have come to ask a favor for him."

"Foster daughter, it must be a fearsome thing that you are come here. Tell me what you wish."

She told him the whole story.

"I can save the father of my grandchild. Go and do not disturb me further."

Spring equinox came. My grandmother put my grandfather in a chair in the beautiful garden around her foster father's house. The headless butler served tea and watercress sandwiches. There was a little warmth in the air, and grandfather was beginning to think that perhaps he'd survive this as well. Near 10 p.m., a green star appeared in the heavens. This was a much more powerful sending.

The green light slowly fell through the sky—growing brighter and bigger as it descended. My grandfather wanted to run, but grandmother put her hand on his chest so he couldn't move.

"I'll die," he said.

"You will not die, father of my grandchild. Be still and do not disturb my concentration," said the voice.

My grandfather thought of the descending teardrop of light as a terrible acid to eat his bones. He expected the headless butler to bash his head with the heavy silver tray.

The teardrop seemed to strike an invisible dome above the mansion. By now it shone as bright as 20 suns, and my grandfather feared that he would go blind even through his closed lids. A cool hand shielded his face, and he remembered his love and why he was here.

The teardrop of light began to roll down the invisible dome. When it hit the ground, it sped off like quicksilver. My grandfather released my grandfather's face.

"It's over," he sighed.

"No," said the voice, "it's just beginning."

My grandmother continued to hold him down. When he started to speak, she put her hand over his mouth. For an hour she held him and all they could hear was the pseudo-birds.

Then there was a rumbling of machinery. The black queen, bishops, rooks, and pawns floated toward the mansion grounds. As they approached, the gate opened. Grandfather waited for the lasers to melt the floating parade. But they floated into the grounds. The headless butler rolled in front of them and led them down the walk. The front door of the house opened and they floated in.

It was a long parade of doormen, security workers, longshoremen, teachers, and robots grandfather couldn't identify. Some would step off the trail and move toward my grandfather's chair

*My grandfather
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descending teardrop
of light as a
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eat his bones.*

in the garden. The butler would wheel over and gently push them back.

After the last robot entered the house, things were again quiet. But my grandmother continued to pin him. Smoke began to drift out of the front door. A little at first. Then a lot.

The voice said, "It is ended. Go."

IN LATE SPRING MY FATHER WAS BORN. It goes without saying that he had Granddad's eyes, nose, and so forth.

My grandfather hated my father. He had had Grandmother all to himself. He began exploring the ruins again. One day as he explored the shadows of a great laboratory, by chance a robot scientist toppled over. When the machine clattered to the floor, its noise filled him with fear. My grandfather's heart beat so loudly that he imagined they could hear on Lister VI. He had thought that a sending had found him.

Now he knew he was a coward. He had risked nothing to gain his brief paradise. Now when something even more helpless than he had come along he had feared it. My grandfather cried among the ruins. Nothing in his life had prepared him for the testing of life. He had been a wizard among wizards and he was as far from humanity as those fools floating around the cold moons. When his crying passed, he decided to run to grandmother, because that is the way we are. Once we discover a secret about ourselves we must find someone, even our worst enemy, to tell it to. Where this commandment comes from I do not know.

Unfortunately pleasure robots aren't programmed to understand cowardice. They are meant to raise executives, after all. They seek to weed out the evil of their owners. In this they reflect a very deep fantasy of their designers. But she listened (and at my request, played back the conversation years later).

She told him that her foster father wanted to see his grandson. So she would take the child to the dark cave for the afternoon, and my grandfather would briefly regain what he had lost.

Then one day she came back and said that her foster father had detected that the engineers were preparing an all-out sending for the summer solstice. He had said that the child's energies were so like his father's that he might be in danger. He would be safe in the cave.

My grandfather had no fear of the sending. Had they not stopped the last two? He made a great show of bravado as though he had had anything to do with his own protection.

The night of the summer solstice came and my grandfather lay in a double hammock he'd made behind his cottage. Eight passed and all was well. When it was near midnight he decided that the engineers had been thwarted by his father-in-law. He called Grandmother to him.

"We've beaten them," he said.

"Why do you think so?" she asked.

"Soon it will be tomorrow and their sending hasn't come," he said.

"Of course it came, it came at noon, the sunlight hiding its approach."

"How do you know?"

"The people you abandoned are greatly filled of hate, so they designed an awful fate for you. The sending found the robot closest to you." And she hugged him to death.

From my father's genetic material came the physical heritage of the new people of Lister IV. From the one in the cave came our psychic heritage, and this blend gave us the elements we needed for the role we were to play in the history of the galaxy. □

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Is This the Presidential Palace?

BY BARRY MALZBERG

Illustration by Michael Whelan

HENDERSON WAS FEELING LOOSY ON Saturday. His head ached and he could feel the nausea in the soles of his feet. The apartment was coming down around his ears.

It wasn't the booze. The booze had nothing to do with his problem. The booze was solace. In the distance, on the other side of the courtyard, he could hear his wife and children yelling at one another. Well, at least they were out of the apartment. That gave him a little time to pull himself together. He had to figure out something to do. You couldn't go on this way forever, Henderson thought. Unless you could, of course. Somewhere in the middle of this there was an answer.

The green monster that had been camped out in the bedroom since Thursday wandered out of there and stood in the doorway, mocking Henderson with its still brown eyes. Uranus, Andromeda, some damn place. Henderson could barely remember. It was impossible to keep this stuff straight. I told you, he said, there's nothing to be done about it. Maybe later.

Am asking kindly, the green monster said. It look fairly human-old, like a simulated jukebox or whatever they called those things down at Ralph's which played music and jiggled around. Maybe in a dim light it could even have passed for a woman but Henderson was not that drunk or hung over. Need absolute details, the monster said. Cannot continue waiting.

Listen, Henderson said, I can't tell you anything more. Talk to Josephine and the kids, they're across the courtyard somewhere. Maybe they can give you what you need. I'm not so good on human contact. I have very serious problems here. Actually, Henderson did not think he had problems at all; what he had was a numbing sense of betrayal and even a solution. But with the green monster around there was no time to think.

Must see the president, the monster said. Is this the presidential palace?

Told you already more times than I can remember that it isn't the presidential palace, Henderson said. And I sure as hell am not the president. He took the Seagrams off the shelf and tilted it over a glass. Well, maybe just part of what was left in the bottle. It wouldn't get him past Tuesday, it wouldn't get him past three this afternoon as a matter of fact, but that was paralysis for you. I don't know what to tell you, Henderson said. I got no information at all. He had had some impassioned, bitter conversations with the green monster a few days earlier, before Josephine had said that she was just divorcing herself from the whole mess, explaining that the monster definitely had the wrong address. Try down the hall or maybe take it to the State Legislature which is in session. Hell, go to the newspaper. Henderson had been willing to take the green monster by the—well, what, flipper?—over there and try to set up the situation. But the monster had wanted no part of that at all. You are the conduit, the monster had said, or something like that. You will tell what we need to know just as I am the conduit. Some conduit. He had to take control of the situation, that was all. There came a time when a man had to make a decision. Take it on the road, he said to the monster. Take

"He (Raymond Carver) had written some science-fiction stories but when he got into John Gardner's class at Chico State, he was no longer interested in writing about little green monsters. . . ."

Mary Ann Carver
Paris Review #118

it somewhere else. There's nothing I can do for you and there's nothing you want anyway so why don't you just go?

The monster seemed to shrug, a curiously human gesture. Henderson hadn't had a whole lot of human gestures recently. Josephine gave him nothing but back talk and the two boys had soaked up her contempt expertly, but he was damned if he was going to get sentimental over a green monster from Andromeda.

Look, he said, it's just not my problem. This is John Foster Dulles' department.

He's the one you should talk to. Me, I'm going to go get away from this. It wasn't a bluff. More times than he wanted to remember, Henderson had quit the apartment in the last couple of days, stormed around the development, stubbed his toe on a rock that had scratched initials under the message **WORLD IS NOT**. But every time he came back, the monster was still there. He had not even thought of forcible eviction, the green monster probably had supernatural powers and in any event, considering what was going on in the family, it was the path of least resistance just to let the creature stay.

I'm going for a walk, Henderson said. Tell Josephine I'm out if she comes back before I do. Tell her to give the kids anything. Take them out for a hamburger or something. He hadn't intended to get married that early let alone have the boys. The boys had just happened. That was how it was. . . you got older and things happened, whether you wanted them to or not. Green monsters. Seagram's. Lousy-ass jobs that folded up just before you thought you could get union protection. Busted vehicles and wives who were as broken-down as the spare parts for the mower that he had given up trying to fix. You went along and accumulated, that was all, and none of it made any sense. The monster made more sense than most of it, as a matter of fact, at least it had a goal: to meet the president. I'll see you, Henderson said, walking toward the door. He looked seedy and worthless. He probably should take a jacket in the fall weather but he didn't want to give the monster the satisfaction. Later, he said.

The monster said, Are you going to the presidential palace?

No, Henderson said. They had had this dialogue before. Every time he had to convince the monster anew. I'm not going anywhere. I have no contacts at all. I'm buried now in San Bernardino and that's about it. I don't even know the mayor.

Well then, the monster said. It seemed subdued. It lumbered back to the bedroom where it had curled up under the window and played hell with Henderson's already wretched marital life for these days. Waiting some more, the monster said.

Henderson watched it tromp away, headed for the door, then thought better of it. The point. He'd just walk around and get madder and madder and end up back here anyway. Short-circuit the process, just pretend he had been gone a couple of hours already. He went to the bottle. He couldn't hear Josephine yelling at the kids now which was something, anyway. Maybe things would go better tonight and even with the green monster around they could get a little action going. There didn't seem to be anything else to do. You couldn't tell with these developments. □





For more than 25 years, premier space artist Robert McCall has dreamed our tomorrow.

BLUEPRINTER OF OUR FUTURE

BY RAY BRADBURY

Back in the spring of 1980, I visited Washington, D.C., for the first time, not so very long after the Air and Space Museum had opened to universal approval and acclamation.

Friends of ours took my wife, Maggie, and me out for a stroll in a downpour of rain, just this side of midnight, visiting the capital's monuments and winding up at 12 o'clock in front of the Air and Space Museum, which was dark. Nothing to be seen there. And yet—

Approaching the glass facade we saw outlines of ghostly objects beyond. And suddenly—

A lightning flash. Then—**BAMMM!** Thunder enough to shake the remembrance out of our bones.

In that flash we saw the Wright brothers' plane sailing high through the darkness.

The lightning and thunder died. We waited in the pouring rain. Another flash of lightning. Illumination. Thunder.

And in that instant we saw the *Spirit of St. Louis* soaring alone in the Air and Space night.

Silence. Darkness. Rain.

A third lightning bolt fired the scene, sounded its thunderclap. And we saw:

The Mercury and Apollo spacecrafts. And beyond, to the left, on a great wall:

Robert McCall's mural of our Apollo 11 moon landing.

Robert McCall's Metropolis 2060 #3 portrays the gleaming future of our dreams, as an airbus transports the citizens of tomorrow across an urban landscape. LEFT: On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong and Edwin E. Aldrin became the first humans to set foot on an alien world. From McCall's stunning First Men on the Moon, painted two years later, you'd think he'd been with them.







The rain washed away the light. The rain drowned out the thunder. We stood in the downpour, our noses pressed to the museum window, tears streaming down our cheeks.

What a way to visit a locked, dark museum.

What a way to meet the Wrights, Lindbergh, and the Apollo and Mercury astronauts.

What a fine way to happen upon the superb art of Robert McCall.

Robert McCall? you say. In the confusions of modern art, where does he stand (or fly!)? What's his work all about? Why bother?

Why, hell's bells, you might well have asked that of your child-brained caveman 10 dozen centuries back. He did not much care to rise and go to work. Trudging out in a too-cold or too-hot landscape to freshen up his harder must have caused him to contemplate sleeping until noon with no arousals.

Yet he *did* arise and go, not to Innisfree and a bee-loud glade, but to some sort of mammoth, bison, saber-toothed tiger environment, there to invent with his small-scale science-fiction mind a means whereby to slay the beasts. He took off his arm, finally, and threw it at the creatures. Which is to say, he invented an armlike spear and hurled it at walls of flesh to bring them down. He then drew pictures of further science-fictions not yet accomplished. When he accomplished them he traced charcoal portraits of the accomplishments which were called, in later years, science

fact. He then moved on to more and better dreams, more simple sciences: how to construct a knife, an axe, a bludgeon; how to not only build but keep a fire as mistress against raw nights.

(What to solve the saber-tooth? Invent dentistry.)

Thousands of years later, McCall is in the same wall-painting business. More sophisticated, yes, but still using walls or canvases to hang on walls, pictures to fill a hand-held library like this one. His ultimate goal, as can be seen by flipping these pages into an animation of futures, is to reach the moon, Mars, and beyond to some sort of human collision with rude planets circling Centauri.

Space travel as guarantor of mankind's immortality is what McCall preaches in paint. I echo him. The eye was invented so that McCall could see and trap his vision with color and brush, to activate our dreams and build fiery architectures across the void to ensure life another 10,000 or why not 1,000,000 years.

We are surrounded by doomsters. That being so, the sighted optimists, like McCall and myself, must lead the dumb blind, point skyward, and light their fuse.

So there you have it. All the reasons circling the one big reason and answer, for Robert McCall. His body stays on earth, but



LEFT: For years, Ray Bradbury has told us of a Mars that never was. In Pioneering the Space Frontier, Robert McCall shows us a Mars that yet could be. BELOW: Edouard H. White entered the history books on June 3, 1965, when he became the first American to walk in space. McCall's painting was inspired by the transcendent joy White described to the artist after his exuberant EVA (extra-vehicular activity) experience. (Detail.)



his arm and hand, holding the brush, wielding the shapes and colors, reach across millions of miles of space to the threshold of our dreams and warm our flesh there a century and then 10 centuries from this morning. He paints realities unachieved as yet, in order to force us to soar and achieve them. *There is no grander purpose.*

He is not alone working this time corridor. Before him was Chesley Bonestell, who inspired all the other artists in the corridor to pull up their space socks and head for zero gravity. But while such artists as Robert McCall were walking on air, the pop artists and the odd makers of plaster and papier-mâché mannequins of real boring people to be placed in parlors staring at nothing were ignoring the titanic fact that we had lifted ourselves into the space age.

Let this be my prediction, then, and God how I wish I could live to see it fulfilled:

Robert McCall, because he led the way toward the 21st century, will be remembered, while most of the other painters of this half century will be lost, even though they were famous for a bit more than 15 minutes. Elsewhere in recent years I have described our generation as one that was engaged in a task



Apotheosis of Technology is one of a series of paintings in which McCall mixes the classic architectural forms with a futuristic setting. The artist admits these are not the blueprint predictions of his other work, but instead an idealized vision of technological achievement creating a peaceful, harmonious future out of the wisdom and experience of the past.

not merely technological or military but religious. Not in any liturgical, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Muslim, or Zen sense. Though Zen is performing without knowing you perform, doing what comes naturally. As birds fly soaring, not themselves but of the sky. As seals do seal things because their genes are rudders to their soul. Or as spiders weave ghost windows across garden spars, enacting a tapestry locked in their spinneret remembrance.

So space travel is the result of our secret blood yearning for what it sees. Once given the gift of sight, we could not but put our hands up to try to touch those fires that remained unattainable until our time. Now, mankind in flight will deliver themselves to immortality on some world two or three light-years distant. We are the carpenters, I have said, of an invisible cathedral.

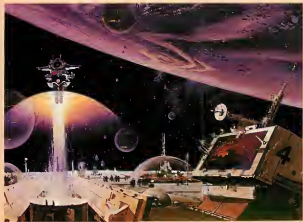
That being so, Robert McCall is one of the dreaming, planning blueprinters. And the more he draws and paints, the more our genetics are stirred; and the more our genetics swarm our blood and breath, the more our artistic hyperventilation. Until a veritable summer night effusion of lights, sparks, and fiery tracks leading up and out and away touch his canvases and our waiting-to-be-touched lives. He, like many of us, has stood at Canaveral or,



even closer, at a testing fire pit in the Santa Susanas in California and watched as the Niagara of water plunged into the pit and the liquid oxygen was ignited in flaming goats and the sound of the sunbright propellant split the air in a great gasp of creation. Such an exclamation, the very breath of God's furnacing, stunned me years ago, flung me back (for I stood in the open not 500 yards away from the shaken volcanic pit) and flaked the dust of doubt and disbelief off my marrow to be cleansed away in my blood. This was no ordinary christening by water rained on my head. It was an acclamation. What did it say? I accept the universe. Accepting, I must go there. All of it is my home.

So says McCall with his biblical illustrations. In them, he writes a new book, Ecclesiastes II. There is a time to be born, and a time to die. There is a time to stay, and a time of going away. This is his and our time of going away; never, with luck and wit, to return. □

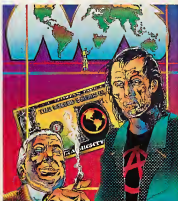
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ABOVE: Aerospace Port is but one of the artistic results of McCall's two decades of speculation about the possibilities of breaking the bonds of gravity. McCall admits that his floating city is beyond today's technology but feels that it might still be possible in the future. LEFT: Earth Orbit, A Distant Tomorrow shows us the destiny which both Bradbury and McCall still believe to be within our reach, if we are but brave enough to grasp it. With other orbiting space colonies beckoning in the background, an astronaut ejects into space from his own future home.

Computer hackers crack the DC universe in Lewis Shiner's post-modern cyber-series.

Not your usual super-hero, ace hacker Jack Marshall (at right) is shown alongside his two most fearsome nemeses: A Corporate Stooge and the Almighty Dollar. Computer generated cover art by Tom Cawty.



FUNNY KIND OF FUNNY-BOOK, THIS. UNLIKE MOST comic books, it doesn't have much fighting in it. There are no spectacular two-page battle-spreads and no superheroes or supervillains. Nobody wears capes or costumes, and there's scarcely any giant ka-pow or kabooey sound effects. Instead, it's all about anarchist politics, corporate corruption and nuclear war.

The Hacker Files is a twelve-part miniseries from DC Comics scripted by Lewis Shiner, award-winning science fiction writer acclaimed for his novels *Deserted Cities of the Heart* and *Slam*. He's now directed his talents to comic books, and his newest creation, illustrated by Tom Sutton and Mark Buckingham, has just gone on sale at comic shops and other specialty stores.

The antihero of *The Hacker Files*, Jack Marshall, is a most unprepossessing individual. When we meet him, he's in rotting jogging-shoes and a circle-A Anarchy T-shirt. He's killing time with a computer adventure-game in a cruddy office festooned with hardware, surge-protectors, and sheets of printout. He's unshaven, his hair is filthy, and he looks old beyond his years. He's pretty old anyhow, for a comic-book hero. He looks like he's pushing 40. I suspect that he's older than Spiderman.

Marshall's phone rings. It's the Pentagon. They're frantic. There's a national computer-network emergency. A chartered Lear-jet and a limo are waiting for ace computer-consultant Jack Marshall. Marshall doesn't have time to bathe, shave, or change his highly objectionable Anarchy T-shirt, but he does have time, apparently, to stuff a neatly zippered set of metal lock-picks into his jacket pocket. And we're off to the

Pentagon and NORAD, where a computer virus is about to start World War III.

I think this is a pretty good comic book. It's entertaining and unusual. It's fast-paced, the dialogue's funny and the politics are genuinely anarchistic and highly corrosive. *The Hacker Files* also has one absolutely vital element for a successful comic book in that it's totally unrealistic and unbelievable. This is a total power-fantasy comic for a target audience of dangerously alienated computer nerds. It's a power-fantasy that deals fantastically with serious ideas and serious issues. I suspect it's probably going to end up putting some people in jail.

This guy Jack Marshall reeks of bad attitude; he's a reckless, brokenhearted paranoid with a chip on his shoulder the size of Gibraltar. I don't care what kind of purported programming genius this guy is; there's no way any Fed would trust this character with a burned-out match. In the real world, Feds are almost magical in their ability to ignore smart hippies, unless they're arresting them.

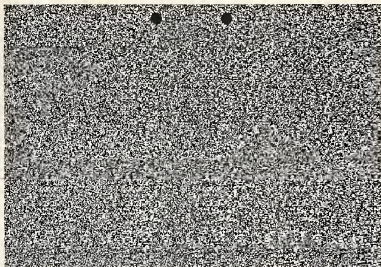
However, this is DC comic-book territory, the kind of milieu where hardbitten metropolitan police forces idolize rich-guy vigilantes who dress up in bat costumes. So, in *The Hacker Files*, the powers-that-be don't have any choice but to employ an explosive and seriously anti-authoritarian character like Jack Marshall.

Maybe the funniest thing about *The Hacker Files* is that the authorities *still* don't trust Jack Marshall, even in this Walter Mitty Revenge of the Computer Nerd scenario. At one point, Marshall gets clubbed unconscious by a Pentagon security guard; after he recovers, he's flung headfirst down a flight of stairs by a pair of corrupt corporate goons.

Most any other comic book would have its hero giving at least as good as he got in the physical-confrontation department. Crackjack hacker Jack Marshall, however, just gets clobbered. His reaction to violence consists mostly of embittered wisecracks. Three or four issues later, Marshall takes a delayed and highly criminal revenge on his corporate tormentors by committing embezzlement and records-tampering with a federal computer. In any world but a comic book, Marshall would find himself stripped of every electronic item he possessed by a humorless action-team of Secret Service agents, who would eventually charge him with Section 1029 access fraud and Section 1030 computer intrusion, both federal felonies. In *The Hacker Files*, however, everybody just has a good laugh at the expense of the befuddled victims.

The Hacker Files is the kind of fantasy where a shabby hippie hacker anarchist can tell a Pentagon official, "We're out of your world now, and into mine. People make their own rules here. You need to learn your way around," and have this incredibly arrogant

Continued on page 72



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no one can. It's not even possible to know who all the authors are, much less read all their works. The field has fragmented.

Indeed, I'm tempted to say it is Balkanized, in the full sense of that word, with rigid compartmentalization. Sometimes there's civil war. A truce allowed SFWA to formalize the entry of fantasy writers into the organization, but that was really no more than recognition of an existing fact. Besides, the divisions are a great deal more serious than science fiction on the one side, fantasy on the other. What has happened is that we've lost even the pretense of a unifying vision.

Now I don't mean that there haven't always been divisions within the SF community, often along political lines; but there used to be a transcending camaraderie. One of my more delightful memories is a party in Chicago in 1962 with Robert Heinlein, H. Beam Piper, Ted Cogswell, and Algis Budrys: every shade of the political spectrum, all gloriously drunk and singing our heads off until the sun rose over Lake Michigan. Political divisions there might be; the Viet Nam War provided even more bitter ones yet. There were utopian and dystopian visions, pessimistic as well as optimistic views of the future. Yet for all that, there was an air of expectation. The dystopians looked at trends and cried warning. I did so myself. But we all believed in something.

It's hard to describe exactly what we believed in. For want of a better word I'll call it progress. Even if we didn't think the world was headed toward that bright future many of us wrote about, we thought it might get there. More importantly, we thought we'd know what we liked if it happened. Even if we didn't believe progress would happen, we knew what progress was.

That's the way the future was, then. Now I'm not so sure. Assemble 300 science fiction writers—it's astonishing to think it, but there are more than 300 science fiction writers!—and you'll have dozens of views of the future. A few will be optimistic; but there will be far more grim and bleak views.

Indeed, *The World and I*, a major mainstream magazine, recently got together five scientists and five science fiction writers to do an experiment in futurism: a picture of the year 2040. The scientists—chemists, astronomist and computer scientist—all predicted fantastic developments in their fields of expertise. The science fiction

writers, on the other hand, weren't so cheerful. Even those who tried to be optimistic saw a rather grim future; and this despite the fall of the Evil Empire.

It's as if we'd gotten so used to the futures posed by the Cold War—holocaust and post-atomic war in the worst case, perpetual fear of war under grim tyrannies on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the 'best'—that we couldn't conceive of a world in which young men and women no longer sit in siles ready to launch nuclear bombs at each other. Apparently many of us no longer conceive of a 'normal' world where people go about making lives and careers for themselves; a world where computers and electronic networks and free exchange of information enhance our lives rather than creating the grisly world of cyberpunk; a world where technology is intelligently applied to stop pollution, and control unwanted environmental changes. A world where humanity controls technology rather than the other way around has become literally unthinkable.

Of course there's some reason for gloom. NASA, having spent a \$100 billion and more since Apollo—having spent enough to take us halfway to Alpha Centauri—is stuck with paper studies of the Incredible Shrinking Space Station, and a shuttle that has to be gattled like a fish and practically rebuilt between \$1 billion flights. When I grew up, we were certain not only that 'mankind' would walk on the Moon, but that we would; that space would be a place where ordinary citizens might go; where pioneers and explorers and prospectors might risk their lives for freedom and the possibility of wealth. NASA killed that dream: no one goes to space but astronauts.

Millions have seen the film *The Dream Is Alive*; but most have also gotten the message: it's alive for astronauts, not for you and me. And not for many astronauts. As a boy reading science fiction, I knew I'd see us reach the Moon in my lifetime. I didn't know I'd see us abandon it. If we could put a man on the Moon, why can't we put a man on the Moon again? Or a woman. But no one's asking that.

It's odd: science fiction/fantasy as genre fiction has never been in better financial shape; but we've lost a lot. Much of that success is due to pure escapism, romantic stories of wizards and elves and magic; and much more is grim and dystopian, bleak pictures of a bleak future.

Not all, of course; and things have certainly been worse. Generally we no longer get the 'New Wave' story, grim of charac-

ter and devoid of either science or plot. Most stories now have a beginning, a middle and an end; indeed, one major editor has complained that what he sees lately is all plot and no ideas, stories with no heart and no mission. Which is, to repeat, there is no governing vision.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. It's arrogant to suppose that without science fiction there is no vision, but—where else is the vision to come from? For better or worse, religion and the churches no longer inspire the intellectuals. Academic philosophy has turned so far inward that it is relevant only to itself. Mainstream literature isn't taking us very far. Academic literature has deconstructed itself to irrelevance. Social science flirts disastrously with the left, and the collapse of communism has left the social scientists little to say as they scramble to recover. As to our political leaders, the less said of them, the better.

Arrogant or not, what else is there besides science fiction as a source of vision and dreams? Who else is showing us a future we might want to build?

Not who is 'predicting' the future. You can't predict the future. But you can invent it, provided only that you have a vision of what you want that future to be. And where will those dreams come from? Whatever the sources, science fiction has to be an important one.

So. We must come back. We must again teach readers to dream, and seduce young people away from baseball and rock music into the world of ideas and thoughts. At NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratories during the spacecraft planetary encounters, reporters were astonished to find that nearly every one of the planetary scientists and spacecraft engineers had been turned on to science by science fiction. Our predecessors inspired those spacecraft.

And sometimes we get to participate directly. Since 1981 the Citizens Council on Space Policy, which includes Buzz Aldrin, General Graham, Max Hunter and a whole bunch of generals, politicians and scientists, has met at Larry Niven's house. Included as full council members are science fiction writers and editors: Niven, Heinlein, Greg Bear, Paul Anderson, Harry Stine, Jim Baen and I. And next year, at White Sands, a spaceship conceived by that Council is going to fly.

Arthur Clarke has said that if mankind is to survive, then for all but a brief part of our history the word 'ship' must mean spaceship. With nearly his dying breath Robert Heinlein affirmed that the dreams are alive. We're going, he said. From the Earth to the planets to the stars. Not just astronauts. It's a T-shirt slogan now: the meek will inherit the Earth; the rest of us are going to the stars.

And that's the way the future was, and the way it's got to be again. □

SCIENCE

Continued from page 27

LANDIS: No; Tipler was making calculations for the forces that are required to keep it from collapsing would be billions of times greater than the forces that keep atoms together. It is likely to be beyond the bounds of possibility to be able to make such a thing. But the proof that such a thing need not have an event horizon that prevents travel into the past is the important thing.

SHEFFIELD: I'm not sure we ought to let the "engineering details" worry us too much in considering the Frank Tipler time machine. In the past century, we have seen available energy densities increase by a factor of a million, from chemical to nuclear binding forces. With another increase of a factor of a million in the next century (and then a million more after that?) who knows what forces we'll control a thousand years from now?

ANDREWS: At this point I want to make a case for a new Copernicus. Pre-Copernican era people saw that everything rotated around the Earth—Sun, Moon, stars—so that the Earth was naturally the center of everything. It was only in trying to explain the anomalies that the truth evolved, that Earth was not the center, but merely a part of the Universe. In the same way, people now view the Present as the center of all existence, with the past fixed and dead, and the future out there to be formed. That's a slippery reference point, at best. A new chrono-Copernicus will prove to us that Time is, and we are the ones who move.

LANDIS: In 1988, Michael Morris and Kip Thorne discussed another way to do time travel. This one involved general relativity, but using "wormholes" instead of massive rotating objects. Wormholes are anomalies in the topology of space; like tunnels that could connect distant places. They wrote about this in a paper in the *American Journal of Physics*, quickly followed by another paper in *Physical Review Letters* which explicitly discussed the possibilities of time travel.

SF AGE: How would wormholes work?

LANDIS: It's been known for a long time that wormholes in general relativity could allow faster than light travel—and of course, you know that in relativity, faster than light travel implies time travel—but it was also known that wormholes are unstable, and they squeeze down to an infinitely dense point in less than the time it would take to go across. Crushing the person try-

ing to use a wormhole as a time machine certainly solved any paradoxes. But what Morris and Thorne discovered was that if something with negative energy capability were threaded through the "throat" of the wormhole—the place where the wormhole opens out from one part of the universe to another—the wormhole would by stable.

SF AGE: But what exactly has this negative energy capability?

LANDIS: This would seem impossible, but they also pointed out that negative energy density is not believed to be impossible in the universe. If the virtual photons are removed from the vacuum—creating a "Casimir vacuum"—what is left has negative

energy. Their version of a space-time machine had a lot of "engineering" difficulties as well. The one they discussed in *Physics Review Letters* was one astronomical unit in radius—and this has to be expanded up from the quantum foam, ten to the septillionth times smaller than an atom—and consisted of charged plates with a charge-to-mass ratio greater than that of an electron, separated from each other by about a hundredth of the radius of an atom.

ANDREWS: Geoff, admittedly, those are tough specs.

LANDIS: And then, one of these objects has to be picked up and moved a few light years at relativistic velocity, without moving the other. This is not likely by any technology we know of, or can imagine with what we know of physics. But again, the point is that the laws of physics don't seem to forbid time travel. And, knowing that it's not impossible, we may be able to find ways to do it that aren't beyond any possible technology we know. Like Tipler's time machine, though, again you can't go back to before the time machine was created. This means that, once we made the first time machine, we may open the floodgates to visitors from the future! They're not here yet, because they're waiting for us to open the door!

SF AGE: Any final words?

ANDREWS: I'd like to quote Arthur C. Clarke's law: Any technology, sufficiently advanced, will appear as magic. Looks like time travel—as we might now visualize it—fills the requirement very well.

SHEFFIELD: I want to revisit the basic question, is time travel possible? If our great grandchildren have time travel, where are they? Why don't they ever come by and visit? I'd be more than happy to give dinner and a drink to any one of them. So if there's someone out there reading this two hundred years from now, feel free to drop in. Any time. □

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COMICS

Continued from page 68

statement actually believed—while they are physically inside the Pentagon during a military emergency. It's the kind of world where large corporations and government agencies are so hopelessly befuddled by their own high technology that they can't survive without help from obnoxious high-school kids.

This scenario is great fun in a comic book, but some people actually believe that there are heavy-duty hackers around who can start World War III from a pay phone. Some people suspect that the hacker underground is in league with the KGB and forms the heaviest threat to the precious bodily fluids of our democracy since the Salem witch-trials. We can only hope that such humorless individuals never read this comic, as it would surely upset them no end.

In our real-life world, real programmer geniuses tend to hang out with chromosome dudes from Stanford and MIT, or Apple Fellows and IBM Fellows and MacArthur Foundation grantees, or UNIX gurus on advisory boards for the National Science Foundation. Real-life genius programmers don't dress any better than comic-book genius programmer Jack Marshall does, and some of them have some pretty weird attitudes politically, but what they really enjoy is a long E-mail chat with their peers about statistical analysis and field-programmable logic arrays.

But Jack Marshall's best buddies are all teenage speed-metal hackers. Marshall explains briefly that "hackers" are a special breed. "They're in it for knowledge, not for money and not to screw things up." That brief exposition serves to justify everything these youngsters do. Of course, they're just comic-book figures, but they're the good guys, and they commit several prosecutable crimes in the course of the comic. They steal phone service, they raid confidential university files, and they show a very suspicious expertise with sophisticated network viruses. (They also skip school and play rock 'n' roll too loud.)

This comic's sense of ethics is seriously twisted. In *The Hacker Files*, the absolute worst moral offense you can commit is to become a "sellout" or a "corporate stooge." The second worst thing is to start World War III. And most anything you do with a phone or computer seems to be cool, as long as you do it with the right motives and attitude.

Underground hackers in our real world almost always claim to have "no criminal intent," to be "just curious." The "hacker

ethic" demands that they not take money and not break anything—just like Jack Marshall explains. Quite a few real-life darkside-hackers, maybe even most of them, actually abide scrupulously by this underground ethic. But they still get put in jail. You can never make a dishonest dime hacking, and you can still get socked with savage federal prison sentences and retribution payments of over \$200,000—just ask "Leftist" and "Prophet" and "Necron 99."

I'd be a little happier, I think, if there were some suggestion in *The Hacker Files* that being a smart hip kid with a modem doesn't make you bulletproof and beyond the intellectual grasp of cops and straights. This may not be a very realistic criticism on my part, as this is, after all, just a comic book; but by golly there are some other serious issues raised in this comic, and they're treated seriously. Believe me, getting busted by the feds can be a pretty serious issue. Look at the way-cool underground hacker kids in this comic, and somehow I envision federal shoe-leather bursting their doors in at 5 o'clock in the morning. I can almost see the looks of startled anguish on their faces as the U.S. Secret Service hauls their machines away, while their unsuspecting computer-illiterate parents freak out in absolute terror. I envision them acting like most every other hacker in legal hot water: informing desperately on all their closest friends, then pleading gaily as their egos are crushed by a humorless, middle-aged federal magistrate who knows *nothing* about computers but can recognize a troublemaker when he sees one.

But then again, I always thought Batman was a fascist.

Buy it, read it; it's a good comic book. But don't model your life on it, please!

OTHER COMICS OF INTEREST

If you want to see what comic books will look like over 100 years from now, we recommend you go to your local comics shop next month and check out the latest from Marvel Comics. You'll find the first issues of four titles showing what life has in store for us at the end of the next century—*Spider-man 2099*, *Punisher 2099*, *Doom 2099*, and *Ravage 2099*.

Though the world does not seem as if it will be a kind place for us ordinary folk, who can get blown away by corrupt government Eco Patrols for polluting, or carved up and sold for vital organs, the world will still need heroes, and Marvel does its best to provide them. Three of these are future versions of some of today's favorites, Spider-man, Doctor Doom, and

The Punisher. Ravage, however, is a new creation by Stan Lee, the man who co-created the entire Marvel Universe, and who is now back to scripting after a long absence.



Cover art from Dark Horse Comics' *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*.

Trace the family tree of science fiction back to its roots, and what do you find? Jules Verne, the literary grandfather of science fiction, who invented the scientific romance by taking us on a journey to the center of the earth, around the world in eighty days, and from the earth to the moon. He did it first, and he may very well have done it best.

Dark Horse Comics remembers this, and so this month they will publish a comics adaptation of one of Verne's most memorable journeys, made additionally famous by Disney's movie version starring James Mason and Kirk Douglas—*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Adapted and illustrated by Gary Gianni, the interior art for the book has the look of fine woodcuts, and pulls the reader in to the period mood of the piece.

We hope that this is only the first in a long line of Dark Horse Classics. \$3.95 U.S., \$4.75 Canada.

The latest s.f. master to try his hand scripting comics is Larry Niven, co-author of the classic *Mote in God's Eye* and creator of the well-known "Tales of Known Space" series. John Byrne is the artist and co-scripter on Niven's tale of the fan favorite Green Lantern in the graphic novel *Green Lantern: The Emerald Corps*. The book contains an ecologically correct message, cute banter, and some intriguing highlights on Guardian history.

S.E.

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GAMES

By A.C. Crispin and Jason Crispin

Interplay transports *Star Trek* where no hard drive has gone before.

Don't just watch Kirk. You can be Kirk in the newest *Star Trek* computer game. Cover art by Kevin Davidson. **BELOW:** A tense moment for the captain and crew on the bridge of the *Enterprise*—one of the computer graphic scenes.



WHEN I WAS ASKED TO REVIEW THE *STAR TREK—25th Anniversary* game from Interplay Productions for this magazine, I agreed with some trepidation. I made a point of telling editor Scott Edelman that I am not only NOT an expert at computer games, I'm a complete novice. I was flattered, but protested, with commendable honesty, that I knew next to nothing about computer games, never having played one. "That's OK," said Scott. "What I want for this piece is someone who knows 'Star Trek,' not a computer games expert."

When he put it that way, I could see (you should pardon the expression) the logic of his reasoning. But I soon discovered that, with the best will in the world, two short weeks of exposure to a computer game do not an ace make. For example, every time one begins playing the *Star Trek—25th Anniversary* game, he or she must undergo a simulated battle with the starship *Republic* in order to gain access to the other games. After a number of frustrating attempts (during which I destroyed the *Enterprise* with monotonous regularity), I decided it was time

to call in an expert. Fortunately, I had one living in my house. My 12-year-old son, Jason, has been playing Nintendo, etc., since before the Teenage Mutant Ninja turtles were anything more than a campy comic book. (He's also been a lifelong *Trek* fan, though his interests run more to technical gizmos and battles than the personal growth and angst of the characters.)

So I begged Jason for assistance, and he magnanimously agreed to help Mom out. (He'd been panting to play the game anyway.) He's the one who handled the space battles so we could get to the missions, and we played several of the game scenarios together.

Star Trek—25th Anniversary is an impressive game that takes the player on voyages during a previously unchronicled fourth year of the Five Year Mission. Interplay has successfully captured much of the flavor of the original "Star Trek." Kirk leads all the landing parties and is very much in command, Spock always comes up with the appropriate scientific analysis, and McCoy is his customary sarcastic, grumpy self. Scotty fixes just about everything that goes wrong with the ship in jig time (and warns Jim when "She can't take much more of this, Captain!"), while Uhura, Sulu, and Chekov perform all their usual tasks with their accustomed skill and efficiency.

The graphics are great—Kirk and the others walk around and manipulate tricorders, medical scanners, and various machines individual to each scenario. The person playing the game is Kirk—the player controls his movements. The other characters move about on their own, with familiar body language—Spock puts his hands behind his back, McCoy crosses his arms on his chest when he's about to deliver a typical *bow mot*: It's great stuff!

The game utilizes the music from the show in appropriate places—for example, the "Vulcan theme" fills the air when Spock has center stage or is in some danger. The game opens with the famous Alexander Courage theme, while the familiar "Space, the final frontier..." trails across the screen, against the backdrop of a planet in orbit—just like the show. I did miss hearing William Shatner's voice, though. Take it away, son!

Jason Crispin: *Star Trek—25th Anniversary* is a very elaborate and exciting game that will keep you on

your toes. The *Enterprise* gets assigned to different missions by Starfleet. After you get your assignment, you have to check your star map, have Sulu plot a course, and then instruct him to assume standard orbit after you've reached your destination.

Each new mission starts out with a battle, either real or simulated. This is where you learn how to maneuver the ship, raise the shields, fire the photon



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—GAMES Magazine

COSMIC ENCOUNTER

You've probably already heard of it. *Cosmic Encounter* has been around for over a decade and has been reviewed in *GAMES* several times. Die-hard fans enjoy the fast-paced, humorous action, the ever-changing strategies and the constant shift of alliances. Now this *GAMES* 100 favorite is back and better than ever. The new *Cosmic Encounter* combines elements of the original boxed set, the best of the previously released supplements and all-new material to make the most playable version of *Cosmic* ever. *Cosmic* includes 48 Alien Powers, flare cards and new rules for reverse planet hexes. Play is as varied as the stars—there are 9,000,000,000 different ways for the Alien Powers to combine, making *Cosmic Encounter* action-packed and out of this world!

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torpedoes and phasers, and do all the other things that keep the ship battle-ready. Also, on your way to a mission, if you stray off-course, you will find yourself in a battle with the Klingons, Romulans, or the Elsi pirates. The Elsi pirates are a lot easier to beat than the Klingons.

During battles there are a lot of vital things to watch for. You have to check your tactical display beside Suva constantly to see where the enemy ships are. When enemy vessels appear on the viewscreen, you can magnify the view so you can see the space outside the *Enterprise*. Phasers are best for long shots; photon torpedoes work best at close range.

Also, it's important during a battle to watch your speed, check your damage and shields, and find out how much damage you've done to the attacking vessels. Scotty can fix almost everything in just a few moments. He can also give you emergency power, just like in the show—if it's available. But if the *Enterprise* is hurt badly enough, you'll see a 3-D view of the flaming starship wheeling through space and blowing up. Then you have to start over.

During each mission, Kirk leads the landing party, which consists of Spock, McCoy, and various security officers. If your security gets killed, you can still play, but if Kirk, Spock or McCoy gets zapped, that's the end of the game.

While you're on a landing party, you get to use phasers, science tricorders, a medical kit, a medical scanner, and communicators. The other things you get to use change with each scenario.

When you're playing this game, you have to remember to act like a Starfleet officer. You are supposed to respect the Prime Directive and seek peaceful solutions when you can, just like they did on the show. If you (Kirk) try to solve everything with a phaser, McCoy makes sarcastic comments such as, "Dammit, Jim, this isn't the OK Corral!" and Spock tells you that you're acting completely illogical.

Ann Crispin: These game scenarios are not a snap to solve, and we got hung up several times, searching for solutions to seemingly insoluble problems. For players who get hung up, there is a 900 number help line. (Hints cost \$1.25 per game, and Interplay does warn kids to get a parent's permission before dialing.)

I also had occasion to call the Interplay tech support number, and found the fellows on the other end of the line, Jim and Kerry, to be polite and helpful. It would be nice, though, if they had an 800 number, like some of the other game companies.

Star Trek—25th Anniversary takes a pretty large chunk of available RAM—550K. Also, the version I received took forever to install and load the data disks—nearly an hour and a half! For some computers, it said in the manual, installation time can be three hours. So if you're figuring on install-



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ing this game, make sure you have some uninterrupted free time. For most of the installation process, you can leave the computer and go do other things, thankfully.

Star Trek—25th Anniversary has eight game scenarios. Jason and I played through the first four and encountered some pleasant surprises—such as cameos from Harry Mudd and Carol Marcus. I was told by Jim at Interplay that the FEATHERED SERPENT scenario owes something to the "How Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth" episode in the animated "Star Trek." There are also scattered references to people like Zefram Cochrane ("Metamorphosis"), which lend spice to the play of someone old enough to have seen the original *Trek* episodes when they were first broadcast. (I'm dating myself here, I know....)

Interplay has made a very creditable (and mostly successful) attempt to capture the "feel" of aired "Star Trek" in a computer game. And it will get even better—Kerry at Interplay told me that a CD-ROM version of this game is due out around Christmas of this year that will feature the voices of all the characters giving all the responses in the game! What fun to hear Uhura tell us when hailing frequencies are open, and McCoy grumping that he's a doctor, not a [fill in the blank]. An update option will probably be made available to all of the customers who own the current version of the game.

I'd recommend *Star Trek—25th Anniversary* to "Star Trek" fans—with the caveat that if you aren't good at video games or computer battle scenarios, first you ought to go out and buy yourself a 12-year-old. Interplay has given the world, fellow Trekkers—and it's warp speed! □

Two new guides for roleplayers.

If you map myth and magic, pin them down like butterflies, and attempt to define the mystic region where they conjoin—does that make them science instead? We're not entirely sure of the answer to that one, but it's certainly close enough for us to recommend to science fiction readers two newly released roleplaying sourcebooks that recently came to our attention. The first, *Monsters of Myth and Legend III* (Mayfair Games, 96 pages, \$10.00), contains definitions, history and roleplaying statistics for the gods and monsters of nine mythologies, including Indian, Egyptian, Persian and Roman. The second, simply titled *Magic* (Mayfair Games, 128 pages, \$12.00), attempts to explore the world of magic in the DC Comics universe, covering popular characters such as Deadman and John Constantine. If you're into roleplaying games, these two books will add unearthly dimensions to your sessions and will make a welcome addition to the reference shelf of any fan of the fantastic. Where else can you find out why you should always try to capture a Yech?
S.E.

MOVIES

Continued from page 21

Check out Charles (Trancers) Band's *Prehysteria*, in which a boy discovers a box of living dinosaur eggs robbed from their jungle resting place by an unscrupulous explorer; *Deinowild*, about a man-sized dino whose name translates as "swift robber"; *Carnosaur*, where a demented scientist creates an army of reptilian behemoths; and *T-Rex*, about a breed of half-human, half-dino. Unfortunately, *Dinosaur*, a proposed Disney epic which would have chronicled the adventures of a race of lemur-like creatures, has been shelved.

Topping the prehistoric payroll is the biggest dino drama of them all: Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, based on Michael Crichton's book about a prehistoric-themed amusement park whose genetically engineered dinosaurs go amok. Although casting has not yet been announced as of this writing, inside sources say the film will

include Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Richard Attenborough, and Jeff Goldblum. A monolithic chunk of the budget, of course, will belong to the lizards.

For the past year, fx wizard Stan (AHHH!) Winston has been developing a clutch of life-size dinosaurs for the film, including a triceratops, several raptors, and a twelve-foot-tall tyrannosaurus which will eventually be attractions at a Jurassic Park-themed Amusement center. Each figure will be operated using the full range of fx techniques, from hydraulics and remote-control devices to operators encased within.

Some estimates project the thriller's bottom line could go as high as \$140 million. Reportedly, \$5 million has already been spent on fx tests which we hear are up to Spielberg's high standards. Insiders are guessing that about 20% of the picture's dino footage will involve the Winston wonders, while the remaining reptiles will be realized by computer-generated imagery conjured at George Lucas' ILM facility. □

BLOCKBUSTERS OR BOMBS?

No two science fiction writers of our time have become so identified with the world of Hollywood and the silver screen as Craig Shaw Gardner and Ron Goulart. Gardner's popular *Cineverse* Cycle of novels took a cockeyed look at our favorite genre movies' wildest clichés, and Goulart's teleplay "The Werewolf of Hollywood" recently aired as an installment of the syndicated TV show *Monsters*.

Who better, we thought, to cast an eye into the future and handicap next year's blockbuster movie wannabes?

John Carpenter will be directing a remake of *Creature From The Black Lagoon* for Universal Studios.

Gardner: This has sleeper hit potential. The horror/adventure material is perfect for Carpenter. I have only one question: What happens this time after the monster gets the girl?

Goulart: What I liked about the original was Julie Adams, but I don't suppose she'll be in the remake. After his remake of *The Thing*, I thought they made Carpenter promise never to try this sort of thing again.

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, *Dracula* stars Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing, Wynona Ryder as Mina, and Gary Oldman as the Count.

Goulart: They're saying this will do for vampires What his *Godfather* series did for gangsters. It's also supposed to be faithful to the novel, which means I'll probably doze off about midway into the second reel.

Gardner: Unless Coppola really screws this up (which he has the potential to do) this will be a big hit. Gary

Oldman should be the Vampire Without A Cause.



Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* hopes to startle audiences with realistic dino mad the way 1925's *The Lost World* did.

Universal is hoping that *Jurassic Park* will be the top box office attraction in 1993. Stephen Spielberg will be spending \$50 million or more directing Michael Crichton's bestselling novel of modern day dinosaurs.

Gardner: Spielberg and dinosaurs should be a winning combination, although the director's last couple of efforts have flopped. I would guess that the more action-oriented plot here would bring audiences back, but probably not in *Indiana Jones* numbers.

Goulart: My sources suggest buying up dinosaur stock—as this movie will cause an enormous boom.

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JACK IN

BOOKS

Continued from page 16

support this otherwise unnecessary hard-cover? Probably.

But, for now, away with all such negatives. I like the tone, the feel, and the pacing of the orbiting-habitat-Kikuyu stories, "Kirinyaga" and "For I Have Touched the Sky," the latter of which I purchased for *Nebula Awards 25*. The dialogue in both stories, one written before a research trip to Kenya and one afterwards, has an almost Socratic purity. Further, each story compellingly, indeed controversially, evokes the culture that Resnick has chosen to limn through dialogue and narrative.

"Kirinyaga," in fact, has provoked criticism for appearing to countenance its shaman narrator's militant acceptance of ritual infanticide. Write Ian Watson three years ago, "Either 'Kirinyaga' is deeply sarcastic or else the main character is clinically insane." I don't think the story is deeply sarcastic or its narrator clinically insane. I see Koriba, rather, as deeply and clinically *Kikuyu*. Like Watson, though, I believe that his ethnocentric championing of infanticide, even as a statement of cultural independence, renders him a monster and the orbiting habitat for which he speaks worthy of civilized rebuke. Don't, however, identify Resnick with Koriba. In this story,

Resnick dramatizes how hard, and perhaps how undesirable, it would be to establish a loose confederation of truly independent "utopias." If no man is an island, no habitat warrants the kind of unmonitored isolation that would enable it to repress or murder its citizens in the name of the principles that it regards as utopian. Or would it? This question requires our attention, and Resnick has framed it vividly and disturbingly.

"For I Have Touched the Sky" frames another important question (the place of talented women in a tyrannical patriarchy) just as expertly, but because it shows Koriba struggling at story's end, to internalize "the consequences of his wisdom," I prefer it to "Kirinyaga." This story deserves its award nominations, its many anthologizations, and its own author's high esteem. Why, I wonder, though, does Resnick fail to include "The Mananmouki," a third award-winning Kirinyaga story, in... *Please Shut Off the Sun?* It belongs here. Indeed, if its length had required him to drop five or six "good-natured pieces of fluff" to accommodate it, so much the better.

Michael Bishop

RECENT AND RECOMMENDED

Donald M. Grant, the first name in fine and limited genre editions, has been a presence in the science fiction and fantasy field for decades, starting as a house primarily focused on Robert E. Howard. He quickly

moved on to publishing lavishly produced, beautifully illustrated editions of the works of H.P. Lovecraft, L. Sprague de Camp, Stephen King, and many others.

One of Grant's latest gifts to us is a new edition of A. Merritt's *The Face in the Abyss* (246 pages, Trade Editions, \$30.00, Signed limited edition, \$60.00), a classic 1931 weird fantasy novel by the author of the seminal *Seven Footprints to Satan*. The production values of the book are up to Grant's usual high standards, with 15 full color interior illustrations by Ned Dameron. Purchase from your local specialty bookseller or direct from the publisher.

Science fiction comes in many forms—including those four-color fantasies known as comic books—which is why we've devoted a column elsewhere in this issue to the best of current s.f. comics. Daring publishers have been gifting us with science fiction comics for over 50 years, and Mike Benton, editor of *The Illustrated History of Science Fiction Comics*, (Taylor Publishing company, hardcover, \$24.95) doesn't want us to forget that. This marks the third volume in the Taylor History of Comics series, the first two volumes of which were devoted to Horror and Superhero comics. Wonderful reproduction on glossy paper treats us to artwork which is for the most part printed better than the original. Benton tells the tale of how we made the journey

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from Buck Rogers to today, replete with quotes from s.f. luminaries Alfred Bester, Ray Bradbury and Julius Schwartz reminding us all that comics and science fiction truly are cousins.

In the beginning was the Word, and then not too shortly thereafter was the dressing up in funny clothes. Science fiction fandom has had masquerades for almost as long as it has held conventions, with costumes inspired by the works of favorite authors and original creations as well. Thom Boswell's *The Costume-maker's Art: Cloaks of Fantasy, Masks of Revelation* (Lark



"Romanian Group" costumes designed and constructed by Kathryn Mayer, from *The Costume-maker's Art*.

Books, 1992 hardcover, \$34.95) is a valentine to those who would spend months and sometimes years making our text dreams into 3-D visions of reality. The 144 large full color pages contains costumes that at times are sexy, funny, ornate, thought-provoking and even nightmare-producing—and all of them worthy of your attention.

For those of us of a certain age, Willy Ley's 1951 *Rockets, Missiles and Space Travel* was the bible that first showed the way science fiction could also be science fact. This year, editors Frederick I. Ordway III and Randy Liebermann seem to have channelled the spirit of Willy Ley while they assembled *Blueprint for Space: Science Fiction to Science Fact* (Smithsonian Institution Press, \$24.95 trade paperback, \$60.00 hardcover). They've managed to put together this generation's version of the book that turned us all on to the wonders of mankind's quest for outer space. Weighing in at 320 pages, with 73 color and 92 black and white illustrations, and with contributions by Arthur C. Clarke and Ben Bova, this book is a must. It will also make a great gift to ignite the imagination of some lucky child already looking greedily at the stars.

S.E.

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number, from the poetic *Martian Chroni-
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dystopic *Fahrenheit 451*. In this issue he
casts an eye on noted space artist Robert
McCall, whose latest work will soon be on
every American's tongue—he was the artist
for the young Elvis stamp just voted in by
a U.S. Postal Service poll.

Jerry Pournelle, along with his co-
author Larry Niven, has just handed in the
long-awaited sequel to his seminal hard
science novel *The Mote In God's Eye*. In an
essay for our first issue, he casts an eye on
the s.f. field past and present, and gives
some sage advice for the future.

The gonzo fiction of Paul Di Filippo has
appeared in the pages of all the major
science fiction magazines, garnering him
award nominations. His recent essay in the
Nebula Awards 24 explaining why Dr. Seuss
was one of the most influential members
of the science fiction community is not to
be missed.

Adam-Troy Castro, whose homage to
Isaac Asimov is our lead story, has most
recently appeared in hardcover in *The Best
of Pulp*. "Clearance to Land," his first
published short story, has already been
widely anthologized. Al Kamaljan pro-
vided the moody and evocative illustration
for "The Last Robot." He has worked as a
scientific illustrator for publishers such as
Time-Life Books and *Scientific American*,
and his other endeavors include art direct-
ing TV commercials.

Barry Malzberg is the author of over 73
novels, and his non-fiction classic *The
Engines of the Night* is considered a bible
by many up and coming science fiction
writers. Michael Whelan, who provided
both the illustration for Malzberg's story
and for our premiere cover, needs no
introduction to s.f. readers. This year Whe-
lan has taken time off from his usual work
to pursue projects with greater personal
meaning. These paintings will be featured

in his upcoming book to be published by
Bantam in the Fall of '93.

Besa Nelson's short fiction has made
quite a stir with appearances in the major
magazines and the recent anthology
Women of Darkness II. She is a member of
the Space Crafts Writers Workshop, which
recently gave a performance at ReaderCon.
Pat Morrissey's most current project is for
the Easton Press edition of Thomas Disch's
On Wings of Song. Her book covers have
been widely seen, including her recent
Science Fiction Book Club cover for *What
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She loves nasty monsters, and says that her
dream job would be to paint a mural inside
the Starship *Enterprise*.

Don Webb has had over 100 short stories
published in genre magazines, and we
are proud to have one of them gracing our
first issue. Moebius (Jean Giraud) recently
finished "The Mad Woman of the Sacred
Heart," a 70-page graphic novel written
by Alexandro Jodorowsky. A collection
of his artwork from the 70's and 80's titled
Metallic Memories will be out soon from
Epic Comics.

Bruce Sterling's latest book, *The Hacker
Crackdown*, is an in-depth examination of
hackers building a brave new world on the
electronic frontier. His most recent work is
the highly acclaimed *The Difference
Engine*, co-written with William Gibson.

Ann Crispin has written some of the
better *Star Trek* novels, and is the creator
of the popular *Starbridge* series of books.

Jim Sternako is currently writing a
Broadway play about magic, and is editor
and publisher of *PREVIEW* magazine. Also
an artist, Sternako has served as produc-
tion illustrator for such films as *Batman* and
The Lost Ark and the upcoming *Dracula*.



Paul Di Filippo



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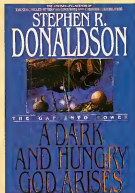
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